BETTY BAIRD

ANNA HAMLIN WEIKEL

THE BETTY BAIRD SERIES

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"'Oh, we must revive the spirit of chivalry, Lois. It is too beautiful to pass away forever.'" FRONTISPIECE. *See page* 187.

THE BETTY BAIRD SERIES

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BY

ANNA HAMLIN WEIKEL

With Illustrations from Drawings
by Ethel Pennewill Brown

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Betty Baird

I

BETTY HEARS THE GREAT NEWS

"I HAVE such a lovely new book!"

"Oh, have you, Betty? What is it?" asked Edith.

"Why, 'Rose Reeves of Belle Haven,'" replied Betty, with enthusiasm.

"A boarding-school book?" asked Edith, eagerly.

Betty's affirmative nod was triumphant.

"Oh, goody! Let me have it when you are done with it?"

"Of course! Edith, would n't it be just grand if we could go to boarding school?"

"Would n't it!" agreed Edith, enthusiastically.

"But I sometimes fear I 'll never get to one," continued Betty, mournfully. "I sup-

pose I 'll have to be like Miss Jane and go out sewing for a living."

"Oh, you goose! Imagine your ever being like dear old Miss Jane;" and Edith laughed hilariously at Betty's lugubrious countenance.

"What in the world are you laughing so about?" asked a third girl who had just approached.

"Oh, Ada, what do you think!" exclaimed Edith, excitedly, neglecting to answer the question. "Betty has a new boarding-school book out of the Sunday-School library!"

"Well, you two are the craziest things about boarding school I ever saw. You don't ever expect to go to one, do you? You would n't know how to act if you did," Ada informed them mockingly.

"I should," replied Betty, firmly. "I should know exactly how to act in every circumstance. I have learned all about it in 'Four Years at Lakeside' and 'Good Times at Irvington.'"

"Oh, you have!" said Ada, sarcastically. "Well, you 'll never get there, anyhow, and you might as well make up your mind to

that first as last;" with which cheering piece of advice she walked off.

"'Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore,"'" croaked Betty, looking after her disgustedly; and the two friends, sitting on the wistaria-covered porch of the old manse, their heads close together, were soon absorbed in their new find.

The same evening, Betty, the daughter of Doctor Baird, the Presbyterian minister of the village of Weston, was walking to church with her mother, when her father, who had been stalking gloomily a little in advance, painfully engrossed with his evening sermon, turned suddenly, saying, —

"Elizabeth, come into my study after the service."

Betty had just passed her fourteenth birthday. She was small for her age. A mass of tow-colored hair, with a promising glint of gold in it, framed the soft oval of a winsome face lighted up by dark, glowing eyes. Her mouth in repose may have had classical shape, but, as she was an incessant talker, this was problematic. Dressed in simple

dimity, and wearing a jaunty white sailor hat with an aggressive looking red quill stuck in the band, she was a picture which drew many pleased, friendly glances.

She was leaning confidingly close to her mother, with her slim sun-browned hands locked affectionately over her arm, and was talking with her accustomed impetuosity, the whimsical curves of her mouth indicating that the subject was humorous. At her father's abrupt words she stopped her chattering and looked up at her mother, squeezing her arm questioningly.

"What 's up now?" she whispered, uneasily; but as they were about to enter the church she received no answer, except a look which told her to wait. During the quiet service she felt like a culprit; to her excited imagination there was an added awfulness in her father's voice, and a distinct flame in his severe black eyes. Every word was a menace.

"But what have I done?" was the insistent question in her mind. She went searchingly over the day; but not one transgression

could she uncover, unless — was it possible that, after all these years, her father had, in the morning service, seen her eat those three pink peppermints which Mr. Jones had given her? Ever since she could remember, it had been Mr. Jones' custom to push stealthily along the seat, with plump freckled hands, three, always three, pink peppermints. To-day he made his customary offering while they were singing "How tedious and tasteless the hour!" and she had wondered if the solemn little man had meant to perpetrate a sly joke. She considered Mr. Jones a perfectly delightful old gentleman, with his red wig, stubby gray whiskers, and big steel-bowed spectacles. His preternaturally solemn blue eyes, peering out of his sandy face, itself not unlike a pink peppermint, never wandered from the preacher. There was something pleasantly clandestine about the whole performance.

"Well," Betty mused, "if it was not the peppermint business it may have been that laugh."

She had happened to look over where old

Mr. Dinkum, with a blissful expression, sat singing "Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." As his face and hands never failed unmistakably to advertise his coal business, the incongruity of it had made her hide her face in her handkerchief to conceal her laugh.

Even this did not seem sufficient for a summons to the study at this unusual time. So, finding nothing to keep her buoyant spirits weighed down, she said comfortably to herself, "'A good conscience is a continual Christmas;'" and gave herself up to listening to the sermon and watching the people.

After the doxology, however, she again began to question whether it might not be the pink peppermints or Mr. Dinkum. As several of the church members insisted on walking home with her mother, she had no opportunity to ask the burning question, and hurried ahead impatiently, determined to get to the study early and have the ordeal over.

She reached there some time before her father. This was not the first occasion on which she had been summoned into the pres-

ence of those august theological books and stern line engravings of great and good men, and she had always left them weeping, to find in her mother's arms the mercy which tempers justice.

However, to-night she was not wholly cast down, for she had the sustaining consciousness that at least she had gone through the evening service without one outward deviation from the best possible church deportment. It was not always thus. At her age girls have eyes all around their heads, and things seem planned so that nothing ridiculous escapes them, and these eyes of hers had got her into many a scrape; but to-night she sat almost composedly in the dimly lighted study, and Dante's stern face looked less forbiddingly at her out of his untied night-cap (as she thought it was), and Martin Luther appeared quite recklessly fat and jovial. Thus does a good conscience reflect itself on all the surroundings.

Waiting made Betty restless, however, and the familiar objects in the room soon lost their interest.

"Why does n't father come? What is it all about? Oh, dear, won't those people ever go?" She slid out of her chair and went to the landing at the head of the stairs to see if they were still there. Yes, their tranquil voices floated up on the summer breeze to the impatient, sleepy child.

"They will never go," she said, half aloud, as she went back into the study and began to look at her father's books, pointing them out to herself, and whispering the titles, "Robertson's Sermons," "History of the Reformation," "Chateaubriand's Genius of Christianity," "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures.

They had never failed to interest her, but to-night she followed them with indifferent eyes until she came to her father's copy of Thomas à Kempis. At the sight of the worn cover her face grew bright, and she took it down lovingly and carried it to the table; curling up in the chair she was soon lost in it. She had lately read "The Mill on the Floss," and it had awakened in her "that instinct of emulation which is but the other

side of sympathy." Maggie Tulliver was just her own age when she had found the old monk's book, which, with its note of self-renouncement, had marked the turning point in her life. Betty had felt she could never be happy again until she possessed a copy of " the little old clumsy book," and she had begged her father to give her one for her birthday present. Maggie's later and great renunciation did not interest Betty, for she took out of books only the things that appealed to her girlish sympathies.

Betty had waited a quarter of an hour or more, when her father entered with deliberate step. She jumped out of the chair and offered it to him, glad that the suspense was over at last. The door opened again, and, to her delight, her mother came in, and the two sat down together on the sofa. Doctor Baird coughed, as he always did before speaking, — a thin, scholarly little cough. He was a very good man, and deeply learned; but he was not intimately acquainted with childhood, and Betty had some fear mingled with her love for him. Without preliminaries he said, —

"You have just passed your fourteenth birthday, Elizabeth, and your mother and I have had many long conversations about your future. It seems best that you should be educated, so that you can teach in case you are deprived of my support." He paused, his thin, long fingers playing nervously with his gold penholder.

"You are aware," he continued, "that the educational facilities of Weston are meagre, and that you have almost exhausted their resources, so we have decided to send you to boarding school." Again he paused and looked down reflectively, missing the radiant smile, which, for an unthinking instant, flashed across his daughter's face; but the smile was immediately followed by a cloud, as the thought rushed in that this meant leaving home.

"Oh, I can't go. I can't leave you and mother," she cried, putting her head on the shoulder of her mother, who gently smoothed the tangled locks.

"You surprise me, Elizabeth," replied her father, in his steady, even voice. "I believed

you possessed of too much fortitude to give way to childish weakness. Your mother and I are doing this for your own best good."

"Oh, I know you are," cried the child, remorsefully, lifting her head and dabbing her eyes recklessly, "only I can't be brave all at once. May n't I wait another year? But I do just love boarding schools!"

Her mother smiled and patted the hot little fist holding the crumpled handkerchief.

"I am glad the idea is not wholly repugnant to you," remarked her father, dryly.

"Oh, it is not the boarding school. But I can't — I can't leave mother — and you — and home — and — " and sobs hyphenated the words. Her mother drew her closer, saying softly, —

"I know my brave little daughter will not give way. It will be hard for your father and me, and you can help us bear it."

"I will, I will;" and she sat up determinedly.

"Now I think we can pursue the matter

with more calmness," remarked her father, as one who had retreated to a safe corner until the storm should pass and then emerged into the sunshine.

"As you know, we have always purposed sending you to The Pines, our Cousin Elizabeth's school. A letter from her determines us to have you go next month. It is the part of wisdom to overcome our natural reluctance to separate."

At these words Betty flew over to him, and, throwing her arms around him, told him between excited hugs, that she would be good and do exactly as he wished. "For you are the bestest father in the whole world," she said fervently. He smiled at her, patting and kissing her flushed cheek.

"Now run back to your mother and get quiet, for I want to say a few words to you." He was less unbending and bookish than usual and much of her awe vanished.

"In the first place, daughter, you are going among girls who have been reared in the lap of luxury and whose tastes and habits will greatly differ from yours. I want you

to preserve your own commendable simplicity, nurtured as it has been by your mother. Wealth, expressed in fine clothes and extravagant expenditures, brings neither happiness nor peace."

"Oh, you know, father, I don't care a thing about grand dresses for myself. I scorn them;" and Betty gave a superior sniff.

Her mother glanced at her husband with a pleased look, saying, "I am sure Elizabeth will not be dissatisfied, even if her belongings do not quite equal those of the other girls. She never thinks about such things."

"I am glad to hear it," replied her father, smiling pleasantly. "I want my daughter to devote her thoughts to worthier subjects. Preserve your independence, but —" and he hesitated, for his daughter's characteristics were not very clear to him, "— if there is a tendency in your nature, as I have sometimes thought, to be too impetuous and enthusiastic, you must try to overcome it, or you will find it difficult to accommodate yourself to the

ordered life of the school. You should cultivate the habit of thinking twice before you speak."

"I don't see how I could think twice before I speak, father, for the words fly out of my mouth before I know what they are to be;" and Betty looked puzzled. Her parents laughed, and her mother remarked,—

"That is a lesson you must learn gradually, dearie, for it does not come to you naturally as — quoting does;" and she smiled with a reproving shake of her head.

"Why, that just pops out too," said Betty. "But is The Pines a real palace, father?" she asked eagerly. "I 'd love to live in one for a while, to see how it feels."

"Oh, not a palace, child. I am sure Cousin Elizabeth's school, while no doubt a substantial and comfortable building, will be far from that. Do not have your expectations raised too high, my little enthusiast."

"It 's long after Elizabeth's bed hour," suggested her mother, softly.

"Oh, I 'd love to sit up all night and talk about it," exclaimed Betty.

"I fear there will not be much sleep for those bright eyes to-night," said Mrs. Baird.

"Yes, it is time to say good-night," said the father; and Betty kissed them both and ran to her room.

II

THE SECRET

LONG that night Betty lay sleepless. She could not have told whether sorrow or joy predominated in the crowded emotions of her heart. She must leave home. Sorrow! She was going to boarding school. Joy!

Her reading comprehended a wide range of subjects for one of her age; but she loved poetry best of all, and this love, combined with an unusually retentive verbal memory, filled her mind with a great variety of poetic quotations. In prose she found the greatest excitement in boarding-school stories, and the Sunday-School librarian could not keep up with her eager demand for "more boarding-school books."

Elizabeth Baird of Weston in a boarding school! Surely she dreamed! She could hardly wait for morning, when she could

tell the wondrous news to Edith Kenneday. She could see it printed in the Weston *Gazette:* "Elizabeth (maybe they will call me Miss now) Baird, daughter of the Reverend Doctor Baird, has just left for boarding school. The fashionable and widely known school, The Pines, has been selected for our young friend." She would cut it out and show it to the other girls at The Pines.

Her excited little head was crowded with fancies, while pictures of The Pines rolled before her like those of her old kaleidoscope, — fragments put together out of stories and dreams, — making a strange medley of color and form. She thought of her beloved Lillie Bent in "Four Years at Lakeside." Could she emulate the lovely Lillie, and be the favorite, not for any personal charm, but because she was good, and unselfish, and darned her roommate's stockings, nursed the other girls when they were sick, and was gentle and kind to the timid new ones? This had a great fascination for her, for she was still under the spell of Maggie Tulliver's

example; but the memory of the vexatious way darning-cotton has of tangling, and the endless precepts of her mother about puckering and drawing up holes, lessened her enthusiasm.

Or could she be a fascinating madcap like Peggy, in "Good Times at Irvington," playing pranks, the leader of all the midnight feasts, the ingenious contriver of all the different forms of forbidden fun?

There, too, was the proud, dark-haired Rose Reeves of Belle Haven School, in the book she had read that very afternoon, so exclusive that all vied to gain her friendship. Should she be like her? This picture held her imagination for a moment, but was dismissed peremptorily. Loving little thing that she was, she could not, even in thought, bear the sense of loneliness. Oh, no! She never, never could be like the proud Rose! She would love her schoolmates as soon as she saw them. They would be eager to see her, for of course new girls are always interesting, and they would soon see she was n't stuck up. They would all crowd around

her, and she would tell them about Weston and Edith, and would show them her father's and mother's pictures. She must not forget to take something to eat, — cake or ginger-snaps, for they would sit up late talking and would get hungry. She felt sure there never were such nice girls as those at The Pines. Oh, she must be so kind, and not want everything her own way, as that hateful Liz Clayton said she did; though, of course, everybody knew Liz said it because she was mad at her, and there was n't a grain of truth in it. She would be unselfish, as her mother wanted her to be. She would try so hard.

How could she remember their names? Meeting so many girls at once she would have trouble, though names were easy for her. One would be Annie, another Mary, and oh, perhaps one would have that beautifully romantic name of Gwendolen. Would they like her old-fashioned name? Very likely they would soon, maybe that very night, have a special name for her; girls at boarding school are so funny and original!

They never do things like other girls. One thing she was sure of, she would not be indifferent to her studies. She would be valedictorian.

Mingled with this high courage and fleeting ambition of the fledgling was the true yearning for the home nest; and she was glad when it was light enough to get up and see her mother. No sooner was breakfast finished than she threw on her white sailor hat, snapping the elastic under her chin, kissed her mother, and skipped out of the house. That wretched lump persisted in sticking in her throat whenever her eyes fell on her mother, and she wanted to get away. Then there was The Secret!

"I am going to tell Edith, mother," she called out, as she hurried past the window, adding good-naturedly, "Won't she be mad because she is n't going?"

"What will your new preceptress say, when she hears you say 'mad'?" asked her mother. Betty made an exaggerated curtsey, her hand to her heart, as she suggested, —

"'Grieved, if it please you, Miss Baird,'"

and, with a saucy swing, she ran out of the yard, calling back over her shoulder, —

"'. . . all the world round
If man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be found.'"

"Such a memory! Now where did she pick that up?" smiled her mother, as she watched her beckon eagerly to a girl of her own age who was coming out of a pretty, old-fashioned house opposite.

"Oh, Edith, wait a minute," she cried excitedly, and dashed across. "I have a secret to tell you, such A SECRET! Now promise me you won't tell a soul, not even Ada."

"I promise," replied Edith, earnestly, her eyes as big as saucers.

"Cross your heart," demanded Betty, solemnly.

"Honor bright!"

"You promise you'll never divulge this secret to Amy or Martha or Jane?" continued Betty, impressively.

"Hope I'll never!"

"I feel I can trust you, Edith," responded

Betty, with an air of importance. A new dignity had come into her voice, and Edith was not slow to feel the change. She saw that Betty was on one of her high horses.

During these strict Masonic preliminaries, the two girls had been standing in front of the Kenneday home; but now, by a common impulse, they threw their arms around each other's waists, and simultaneously hopped, skipped, and jumped up the street, Edith's long black braid bobbing up and down rhythmically, while Betty's taffy-colored mop "stood out six ways for Sunday." After they had skipped up and down; after Betty had tied anew Edith's neat little red bow at the end of her cue, and had fastened her own refractory shoestrings; after Edith had discovered that Betty had missed the middle button of her dress and had rectified the oversight; after they had looked carefully in every direction to see that no one was within hearing distance, the time was ripe.

Betty's dark eyes were bright with excitement, and her lips crimson with the vain struggle to tell The Secret with proper dig-

nity and effect. Such a secret cannot be told offhand, as one may say "I have received a valentine." There is a difference in secrets, as all girls know, and Edith Kenneday was the last to grumble at proper ceremony. She knew with what haughty eyes she, as the sole sharer of The Secret, would look at Ada and the rest of the crowd.

After all, it just came out. "I am going to boarding school next month."

Edith screamed, dropped her arm from Betty's waist, and stared at her with wide-eyed amazement.

"Oh, oh! I'll never believe you, never, never!" she protested, wringing her hands. Even Betty was satisfied with the effect. Ada, May, Jane, Martha, and Sallie knew it ten minutes later.

III

DEAR OLD MISS JANE

MRS. BAIRD now had to deal with the vexatious question of Betty's clothes. The Pines was a fashionable boarding school, one ordinarily far beyond their modest income; but the principal, Miss Elizabeth Payne, was Doctor Baird's cousin, and to show her gratitude for all his father had done for her when she was a young orphan, she had insisted on preparing her namesake for college.

It was a great opportunity for Betty, and her mother was therefore doubly anxious to see her properly equipped to take her place among her schoolmates. She felt she could do this with the assistance of the good Miss Jane Hufnagel, the Weston authority on clothes, who, as she believed, kept herself conscientiously versed in all the latest New York styles. Without one misgiving Mrs.

Baird gave the making of her daughter's wardrobe into her deft fingers. Through the warm August month she, too, sat and sewed, that Betty might appear well in the great school on the Hudson. Her lips quivered and her eyes grew dim as she thought of the years without the light of the teasing sunbeam of their home; but her hands did not falter nor did the stitches drop. A sigh came as she remembered the number of made-over dresses her child had worn, though clothes occupied a remote place in her mind, and she was ignorant that any one could receive false valuation from them. The genuine charm of her Elizabeth, of her sweet, impulsive nature, occupied a far larger place in her thoughts.

As she was considering these things Miss Jane Hufnagel came in and immediately began to sew. Miss Jane was no longer young and was far from handsome, but never did breast enclose a kinder heart nor mouth a sharper tongue. Tall, angular, gray and worn, she was a marvel of unflagging industry. When she had nothing else to do she knitted

twine wash rags. She knitted when visiting the sick, when waiting in the store, when calling on her friends; even in prayer-meeting many a wash rag was begun or finished before the arrival of the preacher. Every one in town saved bits of twine for her, and the rolls bulged out the sides of her big black cloth handbag, her inseparable companion, in which also she carried her knitting needles. There was hardly a spare room in the village that did not boast of at least one of her famous twine wash rags.

In her eyes, to waste time would be as sinful as to throw away the good crusts of bread which she munched heroically with her few remaining teeth. The one pun with which she lightened her labors was that she was "crusty" because she ate so many crusts. How Betty grew to watch for that pun! It never failed to elicit a hearty laugh, which greatly flattered the maiden lady.

Miss Jane collected quantities of clothes for the poor of the town, while to fill barrels for the missionaries of the West was the romance of her life; and with every barrel went one

or more of her own twine wash rags. She kept close watch of people's clothing, and used to inquire where such and such a garment might be.

"You have worn that long enough," she was wont to say. "It is too seedy fer you, and it is time you was givin' it to me fer my mission'ry bar'l;" and she usually got it.

To-day, as Mrs. Baird brought out a long coat of Betty's to ask her advice about it, Miss Jane began,—

"You must gimme that ulster fer my mission'ry bar'l. 'Lizbeth has been wearin' it fer three years an' a ha'f, and it won't do fer no high-tunned school. I know styles. I 'll take them buttons off and sew on common ones. Them 'll do fer somethin' else."

"I won't have those buttons taken off," called out Betty, who was reading by the window.

"Highty-tighty!" snapped Miss Jane.

"I won't. They are beautiful buttons and the coat will be real ugly without them. I love those buttons, but I have had them for

nearly four years, and now I want that little missionary girl to have them. Don't you think she will love them too? It is downright mean to take off all the pretty things when you give anything away. Poor people like them just as much as we do. I know that little missionary girl will dance when she gets those buttons."

Mrs. Baird nodded approvingly.

"I am going to write a letter," continued Betty, charmed with the idea, "and put it into one pocket, and some candy into the other, for a surprise."

Miss Jane was thoughtful and dark browed. "It ain't right or forehanded to leave on them good buttons. I never done such a thing in all my born days. Buttons, specially handsome large ones, is dressy and come in as handy! It ain't right," she muttered, as she turned over the coat, looking at the buttons thoughtfully and fingering them yearningly.

"It 's principle, you know, Mrs. Baird, it 's principle to take off such good things when you give clothes away. Whoever

went and left on nice big feathers or perky lookin' flowers on a hat fer the poor!"

Mrs. Baird shook her head smilingly, for she agreed fully with Betty; but she did not wish to oppose Miss Jane, who felt she ought not to yield the idea of thrift dear to her Pennsylvania Dutch conscience. Yet Betty's plea appealed to Miss Jane's sense of justice and to her warm love for the unknown little missionary girl away out West.

"Principle is principle, 'Lizbeth," she said, after a moment's silence, looking sternly at the girl, who by this time had forgotten the whole discussion and was deep in her beloved book of ballads. Betty looked up vaguely, her eyes dark and misty with far-off things, and struggled to get back to the present.

"You are turrible sot in your ways, 'Lizbeth," continued Miss Jane. "But fer oncet you was right. Them buttons goes to the little mission'ry girl."

"'This rugged virtue makes me gasp,'" quoted Betty, in reply, her eyes twinkling with mischief as she kissed her affection-

ately, for at last it had dawned on her returned faculties that Miss Jane had yielded the point.

"No impidence, missy," retorted Miss Jane, feeling the very foundations of the habit of years giving way as she decided to leave on the buttons. "It's too late now to begin anything else; I must go to work and knit," she said to Mrs. Baird, after rolling up the ulster and putting it away. She took out her knitting, and the bright needles clicked cheerfully and busily, soothing her ruffled spirits. Presently she said, —

"Mrs. Baird, a stimulated vest is the thing fer that black silk dress of yourn that we're makin' over fer 'Lizbeth. So dressy!"

"A–a–what kind of a vest is that?" asked Mrs. Baird, in surprise.

"A stimulated one, a imitation one," Miss Jane replied impatiently.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Baird, as she found it convenient to leave the room.

"Style's the thing, somethin' dressy," continued Miss Jane, when Mrs. Baird resumed her seat.

As Betty had left the room to take a walk with Edith, they fell to talking about her.

"You have known Elizabeth since she was a baby, and has it not struck you that she is somewhat different from the other girls of her age?" asked Mrs. Baird.

"Different!" Miss Jane snorted. "She's as different from them as one of them eagles that mounts to the sky the Rev'rend is so fond of is from my little yaller hen. She's a eagle, is 'Lizbeth. She mounts! What girl knows the potry she does and them quotations she's always spoutin'?"

"She has a remarkable memory, but I hear that is common to childhood."

"Common! Huh! It's stylish. Nothing plain or everyday. She beats that elocutioner that was here."

By and by Betty appeared, gay and hungry from her short tramp after autumn flowers, her hands full of the glories of golden-rod and asters.

"'He moileth and moileth all the long year,
How can he be merry and make good cheer?'"

she sang out at the top of her sweet young voice as she clattered into the house. "Oh, I'm so tired. Where shall I put these?"

She found an old blue pitcher into which she put the flowers, and placed them on the mahogany table which stood against the wall. Their rich beauty glorified the commonplace room. Betty stood back to see the effect.

"Oh, aren't they beautiful!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands over her breast and drawing a deep breath. "They looked so brave and upright out there, with everything dying around them. It seemed as though they tried to be bright just to comfort us, because it will soon be winter and no green things about."

"My, what a fanciful child!" exclaimed Miss Jane, rocking and knitting excitedly, and glancing proudly at Mrs. Baird with an "I told you so!" look, and muttering, so that Betty could not hear, —

"She mounts! A eagle!"

"What's that, Miss Jane?" Betty asked,

for she was very fond of her and could not bear to miss any of her funny sayings.

"A layover for meddlers," snapped Miss Jane, shrewishly biting off a bit of twine with her two projecting front teeth. She would not spoil Betty, oh, no! She had strong and positive theories about rearing children. Her chief theory was that they should be seen and not heard, and she usually lived up to it by asking Betty to recite one of her longest "pieces."

"Let's hear you speak your Sir Gellihed speech," was the request this time. After giving Miss Jane a hug, and calling her a "dear, hateful, crosscrusty old thing," Betty recited until Miss Jane's needles were quiet, and she furtively wiped her eyes with the half-finished wash rag. When Betty was through, she turned to Mrs. Baird and said, in a softened voice, —

"The child must have one of them knitted bead chains like Millie Haines's; and I'll begin it to-night."

Betty clapped her hands ecstatically.

"Oh, Miss Jane, you can't mean it! It's

too good to be true. I 've wanted one for ever so long, and I could die happy if I could have one of those splendid, aristocratic bead chains."

"Die, fiddlesticks!" retorted Miss Jane, always restive under any evidence of gratitude; and Mrs. Baird, after thanking her, said she hoped Cousin Elizabeth would be more successful in toning down her daughter's language than she had been.

"I don't seem to please this select company, so I 'll get me hence," said Betty, as she went out into the kitchen to see how supper was progressing; but she looked back to quote in sepulchral voice, "'T is barbarous to insult a fallen foe.'"

A few weeks later, when the dresses were finished, Mrs. Baird said to her husband, —

"I was a little anxious about Elizabeth's wardrobe, for I have heard that city children have as new and elegant things as their parents, but now I am relieved. Miss Jane has outdone herself. The child has a charming outfit;" and she sighed contentedly.

"I rejoice that Elizabeth is well equipped," Doctor Baird replied; "though I am sure Cousin Elizabeth would not countenance any extravagance. My mother always made over her dresses for her and father's suits for me; and without doubt we shall find the reports of the grandeur of The Pines greatly exaggerated."

"How Cousin Elizabeth will love the child!" said the mother.

IV

AT LAST THE DAY!

THE eagerly awaited tenth of September, the day on which Betty was to start for The Pines, saw her up bright and early. Her trunk had been packed the night before by her mother, who hid many tears in tenderly prolonging the smoothing of the wrinkleless dresses in its depths. Into her brand-new satchel Betty put her toilet articles and some delicious chocolate candies which Edith had made for her, thinking, with a thrill, that she would save them for her new schoolmates, for are not boarding-school girls always half starved?

At the last moment Miss Jane brought the promised bead chain, and a dazzling affair it was. It created some painful doubts in Mrs. Baird's mind, but Betty was as happy over it as if it were made of turquoise and diamonds. Miss Jane's delight in the child's

pride over her new possession somewhat assuaged the loneliness she was feeling over her pet's departure. The bead chain, Betty decided, was not to be worn on the journey; she would save it for some special occasion like a reception, and would n't the girls open their eyes! There was not one in Weston as beautiful and stylish; and she doubted if even The Pines could produce its equal. Miss Jane was doubly pleased, for she believed in "saving things," not in using one's best for everyday purposes. Not to have Sunday clothes was a sign of shiftlessness.

The lump in Betty's throat grew larger as train time drew near. "You must n't go to the station, mother," she said, "for I could n't get into the cars and leave you. If you are here, I 'll make believe I 'm only going to see father off, as I did when he went to the General Assembly."

To hide her own feelings her mother kept up a steady conversation. "Miss Jane made a characteristic remark last night," she said, as they all tried to eat their breakfast.

"Oh, what was it?" asked Betty, glad the

silence was not broken by her sobs, as she had expected it would be in another minute.

"When she was leaving," resumed Mrs. Baird, "she lingered in the hall, the light bringing out all the kind little wrinkles, and revealing the sympathy of her dear old heart as she said to me, 'Don't you worry; though of course it's awful hard to have Elizabeth go away. I know all about these *parting sceneries*.'"

"Very good! very good!" Doctor Baird murmured, while Betty laughed until the tears came, tears that were close to the surface.

Scarcely had they finished breakfast when Edith, Sarah, May, Jane, Martha, and Ada came to walk to the station with her. They were sadly self-conscious, for they stood in great awe of the minister, and Betty had suddenly grown to be a personage.

Her mother took her aside for the last few minutes, and when she left the room Betty said, —

"I'll remember. I'll never forget," sobs breaking through the brave words. "You

make believe, too, mother. Oh, I 'll have to make believe so hard!" She hurried down the steps and the little procession went down the street. Edith, as the best friend, had the post of honor next to Betty, the other girls walking sedately ahead. Miss Jane stood at her door for a last glance, waving a half-finished wash rag, and Betty threw kisses until they turned a corner. Elder Huggentugler, whom she loved next to Miss Jane, trotted across the street to say good-bye, and to tell her to be a good girl and get all the "book larnin' to be had," the while pressing into her hand his favorite gift, a "poke o' peanuts."

Each girl had a last message, a last fervent request for a letter with minute details about everything at The Pines. Even out of the car window Betty had to scream promises, —

"Yes, I 'll write soon. I won't forget to tell you about all the girls. Write at once, Edith, and tell me about mother, and go in to see her every day. Be sure to have your pictures taken in a group."

The cars gave a jerk — another — and Betty was on her way to boarding school.

While her father read the morning's news, she leaned back with her eyes closed, dreaming of The Pines. The teachers did not greatly engage her imagination; it was those fascinating schoolgirls of whom she had read. She would be friends with them at once, those dear, wonderful girls! The very first evening they would come to her room and talk and talk; perhaps there would be a midnight feast and they would invite her. She would show them her books and her bead chain. If one of them wanted to borrow the chain she would not be mean and refuse. Maybe she would show them the lilac dress, — that is, if they had nice ones of their own, for she would not flaunt her pretty dress before any girl with poor clothes. But might it not be more thrilling to conceal it until some reception and make a surprise out of it? Betty loved surprises, and decided to keep the wonderful new silk a secret.

Doctor Baird's amazement on seeing the

great vine-covered stone building, — a fine example of Georgian architecture with characteristic Ionic columns and massive arched doorways, — surrounded by a park with the magnificent trees from which it took its name, was scarcely short of stupefaction. Betty had all the assurance of a girl who had learned by heart "Four Years at Lakeside," "Patty at Hillsdale," "Good Times at Irvington," and "Rose Reeves of Belle Haven School." She rejoiced that her surroundings were even superior to those of the golden-haired Lillie Bent, who attended the most exclusive school in Chicago. She must write to Edith and tell her; she grieved to think that their ideal had been so low. She and her father did not talk much as they waited; she was looking about her eagerly, while her father, not sustained by an acquaintance with her books, was in a state of astonishment.

"Don't you think this must be like the Queen of England's parlor, father?" asked Betty; and she drew a deep breath.

Her father looked around questioningly.

To his simple eyes there seemed something reprehensible in such size and elegance; and his ministerial mind irresistibly questioned how many missionaries could be sent to heathen lands by the superfluous luxury. Betty did not wait for an answer.

"How large is it, father, so I can tell Edith?"

"It is about forty by fifty feet, I should say," answered her father, glad to deal with something definite.

"Oh, Edith can't tell by that," protested his daughter. "Can I say it is as large as our church auditorium?"

"Well, hardly, child. It is about the size of our Sunday-School room, though."

"Oh, what will she say!" said Betty, triumphantly. "Are these Gothic ceilings?"

"No, but they are remarkably fine."

"Oh, look at that chair! It is like one we have with the claw and ball feet."

"That was your grandmother's chair," he replied, "and she gave it to Cousin Elizabeth."

"Is this a palace? Oh, what grand rugs! Why, there is n't a carpet anywhere. I am going to ask mother to have rugs. It looks so nice and clean; and you can slide on them!" she exclaimed; and she almost measured her length on the polished floor, as she walked towards the door to peep into the halls beyond.

"Come back, Elizabeth," her father whispered. "That is bad manners."

A tall, stately, silver-haired woman, with a gracious smile of welcome, came into the room. Though entering without haste she showed hospitable eagerness as she approached the cousin whom she had not seen for many years. She greeted him affectionately, saying in a well modulated voice, —

"Dear, dear Cousin Tom, I am delighted to see you," and, giving him both her hands, she turned him to the light. "The same dear Cousin Tom. And this is my namesake," she continued, taking the child's blushing face in her hands and kissing her warmly. "I am glad to have you here, dear.

You must feel perfectly at home. This must be your home, as your grandmother's was mine for so many long, good years." Betty felt more awed than she ever had before, and could not find a word to answer.

"So must queens talk and act," she thought. Yet she was disappointed. Where were the elegant black satin dress with its flounces of lace, and the pearl necklace, and the diamond earrings? She had never in her imagination pictured her preceptress without these essentials. And no gold bracelets either!

A preceptress in the robes of a queen, as shown in her books of history, was really what she expected; but since Cousin Elizabeth was a queen in ordinary clothes, she was forced to acknowledge that the soft gray gown with its satisfying train just suited her.

An hour's conversation between the cousins followed, while Betty roamed around and inspected the pictures and furnishings of the room. A church wedding necessitated Doctor Baird's immediate return to Weston,

so, after seeing the building and especially the room which Betty was to occupy, and taking notes so that he could give a detailed description to his wife, he said, —

"I must now bid you farewell, Cousin Elizabeth, and to your competent care intrust my daughter, who will, I believe, prove not lacking in obedience to you." With a few parting admonitions and a final kiss he took his departure, leaving Betty alone in her room, a thoroughly homesick girl.

As it was during school hours, this part of the house was as still as an empty church, and never, in all her fourteen years, had Betty felt so utterly alone. The silent rooms around her, the greater ones downstairs filled with strange people, and the outlook from her windows, beautiful beyond words, yet unfamiliar and sad, accented her loneliness. The tears fell on her hands clasped on the window-sill, and there seemed to be nothing to make up for the little manse next to the old red brick church nestling among the great maples. At last she began to unpack, so she could dress for

dinner. The trunk had been filled to overflowing with the things which, she believed, made up an unparalleled wardrobe.

The new, really new, fine checked violet and white China silk, acknowledged by all who had seen it to be Miss Jane's masterpiece, had been very, very carefully packed in tissue paper. Its skirt was without ornamentation and remarkably voluminous, for Miss Jane was really several years ahead of the fashions, in putting yards of unnecessary material in the skirt and sleeves.

"Best put in a good bit of stuff, for then it will be easier to make over," she had said.

The waist too was perfectly plain, save a sailor collar and cuffs to match, made out of some fine lace belonging to her mother. The color was so becoming that Miss Jane had forgotten her theories about children and cried out with delight, "How laylock becomes her! And how it suits her figger!" turning her round and round admiringly; though there was no more to be seen of the childish figure than there is of a

lily stem, surrounded by its green enfolding leaves.

One of her two school dresses was a pretty shepherd's plaid, trimmed around the bottom with three rows of narrow black velvet, and with a yoke trimmed in the same way. She had a coat of the same material for fall wear. The other school dress was the made-over black silk, a trifle shiny, with Miss Jane's "stimulated vest" of white and black silk, which was conceded by every one to be a flattering witness to her taste and originality. This dress Betty decided to put on for her first dinner at The Pines. She looked longingly at the lilac, but that, she knew, she must not wear except on some great occasion, and this, being silk, seemed a fitting dress for her first appearance. Its skirt was at least two inches longer than girls of her age were then wearing, and Miss Jane had given as her reason for this extravagance that "she would sprout up like a bad weed, and then it would n't be too long."

Her two hats were of good sailor shape, a becoming style which she particularly liked

because there was so little for her antics to displace. The last winter's coat with new collar and cuffs of velvet would, they had decided, deceive even city eyes into believing in its newness. Her muff was one her mother had for many years, and the mink was quite yellow, almost the color of Betty's hair, but she felt much secret pride in it. Miss Jane supplied her with mittens, and she had her first pair of kid gloves. Her shoes were sensible. All these, with a few of her summer clothes, Betty unpacked, remembering that only last night her mother had put them in so carefully. It seemed a year ago!

She hugged her dearest books as she put them in place: her Bible that her mother had given her four years before, her Ossian poems, her Thomas à Kempis, and her old ballad book. Lillie Bent in "Four Years at Lakeside" was like a roommate; she would understand how a girl feels on her first day away from home. Then came a worn copy of a collection of favorite poems and a quaint book which had belonged to her grandmother

when a girl, in which was written, in small elegant writing:

PRESENTED TO
MISS ELIZABETH B. SEABURY,
BY HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER,
ROBERT E. SEABURY.
June 12, 1820.

Looking down at her from their new abode, a handsome set of dark hanging shelves which formed an excellent frame for their rich reds, blues, and golds, these books gave her a home feeling and comforted her. Her eyes turned towards them constantly as she dressed for dinner, and more than once she darted over to them and kissed them hungrily. How understanding they looked! How glad she was that she had them! Her father had often spoken about books as friends, but she never knew how dear the very covers could be, and how their gold lettering could look out with true home eyes.

She fingered caressingly the ivory comb, brush, and mirror which Cousin Elizabeth had sent to her last Christmas. They looked very nice on the mahogany dressing table,

but somehow they failed to stir her enthusiasm. With them she placed Edith's parting gift, a pin-cushion in the shape of a heart. A narrow little plait of light brown hair, tied with white glazed ribbon, an affecting gift from Ada, was laid carefully in her Bible. A painted pin tray, Martha's votive offering and the work of her oldest sister, adorned very elegantly and daintily, Betty thought, the white-covered table. She pushed all the pins well to one side so that the wild roses could be seen. On her small writing table she put her pearl-handled penholder and a little gold pencil, once her grandfather's, a box of fine note-paper, and a curious Japanese stamp box. The room contained two brass beds, so she was to have a roommate! Oh, if she were only here now! Betty had never before had such a queer feeling in her heart. She did n't dare to look at her father's and mother's pictures. Would the dinner bell never ring?

Hoping for escape from her homesickness she turned to the window; and her beauty-loving eyes were held captive by the view.

As far as vision could carry there were venerable trees, while off in the distance gleamed the Hudson, like a great silver belt, winding through the green waving shadows.

The dinner bell rang at length, its cheerful peal bringing back to her with renewed force the long-cherished dreams of boarding-school life, its enchanting gayety, its delightful hubbub of girls' voices, and, above all, its true, loyal friendships. There, in the dining-room, were her new friends. Hopefully she ran down to them.

V

HER UNEXPECTED WELCOME

AT the entrance of the dining-room Betty halted spellbound. The great size and beauty of the room, which, in her eyes, accustomed only to the soft light of oil, seemed magically illuminated by the artistic clusters of electric lights; the dark wood panelling, reaching nearly to the ceiling; the rich, heavy mahogany furniture; the great fireplace with high, dignified mantelpiece; the prevalent brilliancy of silver and cut glass and polished brass against the dark background; all these dazzled and bewildered her.

Forgetful of Miss Payne's instructions to ask for Miss Greene's table, she stood there in the middle of the high, broad doorway, a slight, old-fashioned figure that seemed to have strayed out of an old picture, her hands clenched behind her, her face, framed by the

"At the entrance of the dining-room Betty halted spellbound."

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mop of tumbled yellow hair, white and quivering, and her great, luminous eyes looking around helplessly and appealingly. Immovable she stood there, until one of the teachers saw her, and sent a servant to show her to her place. Then, alone, she walked the length of the room.

At her table she found seven girls, and a teacher whom she supposed to be Miss Greene. Fourteen curious eyes saw the "new girl" take her place with eagerness and evident delight. They saw a girl of fourteen, small for her age, dressed in a black silk dress with a simulated vest that gave her the appearance of a child masquerading in her mother's clothes. Her bright, sensitive face was flushed, her dark eyes glowing with suppressed excitement, her delicate nostrils quivering.

On her left sat a faultlessly dressed girl of her own age, with a cold pink and white complexion, clear blue eyes, light brown hair, a clean, high-bred face without a trace of good feeling. Betty had always made conversation, being the leader of the home set,

so, to facilitate acquaintance, she turned to the girl on her left and asked brightly, —

"How many pupils are there here?"

The girl turned and gave her a cold, distant stare.

"Eighty," she said after a pause, in an utterly colorless and impersonal manner. "Why should the new girl address her?" it evidently meant. Betty felt the attitude, though she could not understand it. It was her first snub.

"Some girls cannot talk, and they have that stiff way. Edith is not much of a conversationalist," she commented to herself. She turned to a calm, pale-faced girl on her right and noticed that she too had a cold, distant look, and she did not feel encouraged to go on. What nice hair all the girls had! They all did it up the same way, with a big puff over the forehead. She thought of her own unruly mop and wished hers looked like theirs. Her natural manner won the admiration of Miss Greene, and Betty, after several helpless looks around the table, and frightened away by "that look"

which they all seemed to have, turned to her.

"Did you have a pleasant journey?" Miss Greene asked.

"Oh, yes, a delightful one," she answered with ready enthusiasm, though in a voice which she hardly recognized as her own.

"I should have thought you would have found it quite warm, travelling in the heat of the day," suggested Miss Greene.

"I did not mind the travelling, but I did find it warm work to unpack," she replied.

"That is very wearing," agreed Miss Greene.

During this brief dialogue the other girls stared so unabashedly at Betty that Miss Greene, seeing her blushes, stopped out of sympathy.

When dinner was finished Betty hurried to her room to hide her fast-flowing tears, and, throwing herself on the bed, cried as if her poor little loving heart would break.

"How can girls be so stiff and cold and hard?" she said half-aloud, in grieved surprise. "The Weston girls were never that

way. Perhaps that is the trouble; I am a stranger and do not understand their ways, and they are waiting to see what I am like. It may not have been dislike that madé them stare at me in such an unfriendly manner. Maybe they only want to know more about me before they become friendly. I believe that is it. To-morrow they will be different. They will see that I am not stupid or mean, and they will soon be friendly." She sat up and began to prepare for bed in a more hopeful frame of mind. That night she slept the sleep of exhaustion and did not wake until the rising bell rang.

The next morning she put on her black and white shepherd's plaid dress which, by a happy chance, suited her and was the right length. She ate her breakfast in silence, making no attempt to open a conversation, though hoping that some of the girls would prove friendly and talk with her.

The teacher had introduced the girl on her left, whose direct cold stare made her warm all over, as Caroline Wren; the pale-faced one on her right as Helen Dyke; just

beyond her was Miriam Kendall. Miriam was small, with a red-lipped mouth that pouted continually, while her slightly tilted nose and the dark arched brows gave some piquancy to an otherwise commonplace face. She did not possess "that look" to the same degree, so Betty turned to her rather hopefully. All the girls had high, assured voices.

Miriam was older than Betty, and tossed her hair with the back of her hand, and pulled down her belt quite like a young lady. Caroline and Helen, as if determined to impress on Betty that she was an intruder, carried on a conversation without the slightest recognition of her presence between them. Never was there more perfect ignoring of a disagreeable object; and only the heat of her reddening face kept Betty from feeling as transparent as a ghost.

"Do you know your Virgil?" ask Caroline, as they waited for some of the girls to finish their breakfast.

"Not a line," responded Helen, indifferently.

Miss Greene, seeing their impertinence, addressed Betty pleasantly.

"Have you studied Latin, Miss Baird?"

Betty gave her a grateful glance as she replied, with something of the old proud spirit, the spirit of the girl who has always been at the head of things, —

"Yes, Miss Greene. I studied with my father. I have read through four books of Virgil."

Every girl at the table turned cool, unbelieving eyes at her; then, each with her neighbor, they began to discuss her statement in an undertone, and with occasional glances which plainly indicated complete disbelief in the truth of it.

"She says she has read four books of Virgil," said Caroline, as if announcing a peculiarity of a new species.

"I don't believe it," answered Miriam, in an undertone, as the signal was given to leave the table. Betty had only time to say emphatically, —

"You must take that back."

Miriam pushed by scornfully.

"Evidently they don't teach manners here," continued Betty, indignantly, while Miriam, with her arm linked in Caroline's, swept on, saying, so that Betty could hear her, —

"She 's a firebrand. You can tell where she came from by those outlandish dresses of hers." Caroline tittered.

"Yes, and that hair looks as if it had never been combed."

"How red she grew when she flared up at me!" said Miriam. "Fair people can't afford to redden so;" and her own dark face was very complacent.

"Who is she?" inquired Caroline.

"Oh, a poor Presbyterian preacher's daughter, a sort of charity pupil, I think."

"What a pity we must have her at our table, where every one is so nice," regretted Caroline.

"Dorothy King won't like it," said Helen Dyke, who walked ahead.

"She certainly won't," replied Miriam, sharply. "She can't bear country gawks."

Betty, who was compelled to walk close to them in the regular march from the room,

heard every word of this conversation. It not only enlightened her as to the meaning of "that look," but it was so utterly unexpected that she did not once think of replying.

Tears ran down her hot cheeks as she sat by her window. So far as she could tell all the girls were alike, and all hated her. She could not comfort herself with the thought that every bright girl at school has a jealous enemy, for these disliked her because she was not their kind. She was an intruder and had invaded their table. She had, herself, enough schoolgirl clannishness to know what that means, for she had more than once made eyes secretly at Edith when some undesirable girl tried to share their walk home from school.

She had been too unhappy to eat much breakfast, and now, feeling hungry, she thought of the chocolates Edith had given her. Tears flowed faster as she remembered how she had put them away for her new friends; and she could hardly bite them for sobs. The poor lonely child sat there for a

long time, weeping and munching her candy. Suddenly she sat upright. One thing must be attended to at once. That Kendall girl must take back her insulting words. How could she make her do it, though, when she would not even look at her? Her favorite reading of the old fighting days suggested a way. She could send her a challenge! She wiped her eyes, hurried to her writing desk, and quickly wrote in her large, upright hand:

Miss Baird feels grievously insulted by Miss Kendall's spiteful observations on the reading of Virgil at the breakfast table, and demands redress in the form of an apology before the same company. If refused, she hereby challenges said Miriam Kendall to a competitive reading of Virgil.

This made her feel much brighter. Barely had she finished, when she received a message from Miss Payne to come to her room.

VI

THE CHALLENGE

IN response to Miss Payne's request Betty knocked at her door, and a preoccupied voice said in answer, "Come in!"

In a beautiful sunny room lined with books and pictures, at a large mahogany writing desk strewn with papers, sat her cousin, who looked up absently as Betty walked towards her.

"Oh, you, little Elizabeth? I am glad you have come. I was so busy I had almost forgotten you. Don't tell your father," she added, laughing.

"Father wouldn't believe anything against you, Cousin Elizabeth," the girl replied warmly, remembering the reverence with which her name was always spoken at home. Something of this faith was communicated to Miss Payne and gave a twinge

to her guilty conscience, and determined her, for the present at least, to give Betty her undivided attention. Miss Payne was a very busy woman, who not only conducted a large school but also wrote and lectured and attended to numerous club duties.

"Your father has told me about your studies. You are, I judge, ready for the class in which Miriam and Caroline are, all girls a year or two older than you. I am not surprised to find you so far advanced in Latin, knowing your father's love for it. Let me hear you read." She gave Betty a fat little volume of Virgil. "Remarkable!" she exclaimed, when Betty had finished, and Betty started with pleasure and surprise. "You could go a class or two higher in Latin. How like Cousin Tom!"

"Yes, but, Cousin Elizabeth, I don't know a thing about geometry, and I don't understand algebra, and I hate arithmetic," said Betty. Miss Payne smiled sympathetically.

"Of course you do; we all do. Arithmetic is one of the necessaries of life, and we naturally prefer the luxuries."

During this interview Betty was undergoing an examination of which she was wholly unconscious. Miss Payne was a student of girl nature; so while Betty read aloud a little poem, her cousin was observing her minutely.

"Dear little old-fashioned thing! I didn't know that style had survived," she mused. "I wonder how she will affiliate with my fashionable set. She is probably the brightest girl in school, but that fact won't endear her to the others. I must tell Miss Greene to watch, and not to allow the girls to be overbearing. But I'll not protect her. She has spirit, courage, self-confidence, a nimble wit, alertness, and evidently large imaginative faculties. It will be interesting to watch her development. There is nothing to criticise in her manner except, perhaps, a too great enthusiasm,—a contrast to my cool, self-possessed pupils. She reads like a scholar—that's Tom; she stands and sits like a lady—that's her mother. There is, however, something boyish about her which will get her into scrapes. She has

beautiful cameo-like features, though at first one does not notice them, because one is conscious only of her great beautiful eyes and mass of pale, wild hair. What a mop! I must try to smooth it out. Such a strong chin for a child — like her grandmother's. It is strange to see that chin again on a child. I 'll not coddle her." No doubt Miss Payne thought she could coddle.

"How do you like your schoolmates?" she inquired, aroused from her study of the girl by the completion of the poem.

Betty hesitated and looked down uneasily, for she could not tell the incident at the breakfast table without feeling like a tell-tale, and only that incident could explain the strength of her dislike for her companions. Miss Payne saw the disturbance in her face, and surmised that Betty had already had trouble of some kind.

"I have n't talked with them much, Cousin Elizabeth," she said evasively, playing with the book of poems.

"Of course not, but I thought you might have a few impressions."

"Impressions in plenty," exclaimed Betty, with a warmth not flattering to the girls.

"My child, I want to help you to accommodate yourself to your new surroundings," said Miss Payne, mechanically arranging the papers on her desk; for she was disturbed by the evident fact that her namesake had not been graciously received. "You have always lived in a village," she continued, "where every one knew you and where you have had things very much your own way. The girls here have had a different kind of life. They are more mature in many respects, and less in others. You will find them very self-possessed and inclined to be critical."

"Oh, yes, I have discovered that," answered Betty, as she drew herself up.

"Now don't be sensitive, Elizabeth, for nothing in the world will make you so miserable. Don't yield to it for a moment — flee from it. Forget yourself by thinking of others. As far as possible take these girls as they are. Don't analyze them; don't think much about how they treat you. You will

find your friends by and by." Miss Payne laughed and shook her head. "Oh, if you young people could or would profit by the experience of others!"

The luncheon bell saved Betty the necessity of replying, but she thought, "Take that Kendall girl as she is? Well, I guess not!" and she ran upstairs to get the challenge.

As she took her seat at the table she put the challenge at Miriam's plate; and Miriam, coming in later, picked it up curiously and turned it over, wondering what it was and who had sent it.

"I don't know the writing," she said to Caroline.

"Oh, open it, Miriam," exclaimed Caroline, petulantly. "You always make such a fuss."

Miriam did open it, and as her eyes caught the words she grew scarlet, and concentrated scorn settled on her darkening face.

"The impudent thing!" she muttered, darting a withering glance at Betty, who, as far as her trembling fingers and fluttering heart would allow, was eating, apparently

deaf and blind to the storm gathering around her. It was not an easy situation, for every girl at the table, she well knew, would side with Miriam; and even at that natural age for eagerly-sought martyrdom, Betty's lot that hour was one to make even a stout heart quake.

Miss Greene perceived trouble, and requested Miriam to put away the letter, which she was beginning to show to her neighbors. Sullenly she put it into its envelope, and Miss Greene, suspecting that Betty was the storm centre, tried to draw attention from her by brisk questions; for by that time every girl at the table had had it communicated to her, in some such mysterious way as that which warns insects of the approach of an enemy, that the new girl had done something atrocious for which she deserved, and would certainly receive, swift punishment at their hands.

After this zestful luncheon Miriam, Caroline, Helen, and several others of the table set hurried to Miriam's room for a council of war.

"What is the matter, Miriam? What has the new girl done?" inquired Mary Livingstone. "At the table you turned all the colors of the spectrum, though your countenance was not a rainbow of promise. You were a perfect thunder-cloud."

She was allowed to get through this sentence, for Mary Livingstone was — well, she was Mary Livingstone, not only a senior and one of the best scholars in the school, but one of *the* Livingstones.

"Just wait until you read this thing," almost screamed Miriam, as she thrust the challenge into Mary's hand.

Mary read aloud with peculiar intensity:

"'Miss Baird!' Ah, so that is the Paderewski girl's name." ("Go on, go on!" the eager bevy cried in chorus.) "'Miss Baird feels grievously insulted by Miss Kendall's spiteful observations on the reading of Virgil —' so that is the way the wind blows — 'at the breakfast table, and demands redress —' redress, good word!" ("Her effrontery," muttered Miriam.) "'— in the form of an apology —' good for her! '—

before the same company. If refused, she hereby challenges said Miss Kendall — ' oh, ho, little monkey " (" Impertinent monkey ! " said Miriam.) " ' — to a competitive reading of Virgil.' "

" Well," breathed Mary, when she had finished, as she sank, apparently exhausted, into a chair, " that is the most novel piece of literature I have ever read." Looking up from her low seat she laughed, characteristically amused. " You should see yourselves standing around like conspirators, and all for one little country girl who has taken a mediæval form of demanding justice."

" She 's a fool," said Miriam, spitefully, stamping her foot.

" Oh, perhaps, but a fool could hardly get up a note like this. It is on Tiffany paper, the writing not half bad, not a word is misspelled, and every small requirement is fulfilled. I doubt if she is fourteen. I am nearly seventeen, and I could not write a better note. It takes breeding too ! "

" Mary, you are always generous," spoke up a girl who had been the quietest of the

group, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, small and very pretty.

"Not generous, Dorothy, but I always have an irresistible impulse to take the other side. The new girl is young, alone, and evidently clever. There is something ingenuous about the letter."

"She is unpleasant to me," Caroline said, her rose and cream face showing that she had met an antipathetic nature. "I simply can't endure heroics."

Dorothy and Mary exchanged swift glances.

"I can easily believe it, Caroline," Mary answered dryly.

"Little upstart! Coming here dressed like a guy, and sending such a letter to one of us!" scornfully said Jessie Bentworth, usually called Jess.

"Did you ever see such hair?" asked Helen Dyke.

"Yes," said Caroline, disgustedly; "and the way she tried to push herself in the very first meal!"

"Well, we 'll just freeze Paderewski out,"

said Dorothy, languidly. All nodded assent except Mary, who said, —

"She is countrified, but I like her spunk, and I shall take more interest in her than I usually do in new girls. But it does seem doubtful about the four books of Virgil."

"Yes, that is decidedly fishy," said Jess, making a wry face.

"I certainly shall take some interest in her," said Dorothy, in her soft, bored voice. "I need amusement."

"She 's perfectly horrid," said Miriam, frowning.

Word of the challenge soon reached Miss Greene. The humor of the situation appealed strongly to her; but she felt that it would be neither wise nor kind to pass it over without ascertaining the motive which prompted Betty to act in this romantic manner, — whether it was pure romance or a sense of insulted dignity and the belief that this was the only way to assert her claim to justice. Miss Greene was the soul of fair play, and her admiration for Betty was increased since she had found her sensitive as

well as courageous; for it took courage to face a table full of hostile girls and bring the matter to a quick issue, rather than wait to ingratiate herself little by little, as an older and more worldly-wise spirit would have done. So she sent for Betty, who responded with alacrity; for she felt that Miss Greene was a friend.

Miss Greene's room was enough like Doctor Baird's study to put Betty at her ease at once, while the calm brown eyes gave her a feeling of home love and comfort, — a feeling she had not had since coming to The Pines. She looked intently at the books, and Miss Greene asked her if she liked to read.

"Yes, Miss Greene," she answered. Though usually gifted with too great an abundance of words she felt strangely tongue-tied. She might cry if she uttered another word, for the reaction was coming on after the high-strung day.

"I have a nice edition of Stevenson's 'The Child's Garden of Verses;'" and Miss Greene handed it to Betty.

"It is very pretty," Betty answered, looking at the cover, and turning the leaves.

"I like the way she handles a book," Miss Greene reflected. "No moistening of her thumb or careless bending of the cover. Evidently, though, she is not much of a reader, for she seems very indifferent."

"I have not read it," Betty said, as she returned the book.

"What poetry do you like? Or don't you care for it? Many of the girls here do not."

"Not like poetry!" and Betty's eyes shone. "I love 'Flodden Field,' 'The Last Minstrel,' 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' 'Hohenlinden,' 'Percy and Douglas,' and — and — oh, lots of others;" and she stopped for breath.

"Oh, they are the ones I love too!" exclaimed Miss Greene, "and 'Sennacherib,' and 'Young Lochinvar.'"

"Yes, and 'The Skeleton in Armor.' They are all in an old reader of father's. I know them all by heart," she exclaimed, her face lit up with enthusiasm. "And this too, —

"'At midnight, in his guarded tent,
The Turk was dreaming of the hour.'"

Then Miss Greene quoted, her eyes dark with the spirit of the gay old strife, —

> "'Fair stood the wind for France,
> When we our sails advance,'"

and the two in concert triumphantly recited "Agincourt" to the end.

"Just those names make me cold all over,

> "'Beaumont and Willoughby
> Bare them right doughtily,
> Ferrers and Fanhope,'"

said Betty, shrugging her shoulders together with delight.

"I know," said Miss Greene, "for I thrill every time I read —

> "'There was a sound of revelry by night,
> And Belgium's capital had gathered then
> Her Beauty and her Chivalry.'"

"The old ballads are more shivery," said Betty. "They just 'ha'nt' me, as our old cook Katy says; but Ossian is my favorite."

"Ossian!" exclaimed Miss Greene, looking at the child in surprise. "He always seemed gloomy to me."

"I don't know why I like him. Father says he is sentimental; but it is all so gray

and grieving, and everything is solemn and large and grand. I love old, old things that don't happen nowadays."

"'. . . old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago,'"

suggested Miss Greene, lifting her eyebrows inquiringly.

"Oh, that just explains what I like about Ossian and the ballads," said Betty, clasping her hands delightedly.

"We certainly have had an hour with the poets," said Miss Greene, smilingly, "and I feel we must be friends, having been introduced by the very best people, — by Drayton and Byron, for instance, — but in my enthusiasm I must not forget to tell you why I sent for you." She hesitated. "I know about the challenge."

Betty reddened, but spoke up vigorously. "Was n't that a mean, contemptible thing for that Kendall girl to say?" she demanded.

"It was," assented Miss Greene, "but I am going to ask you to let it drop. I shall talk with Miriam, and she will understand

that you are doing it at my request. I shall tell her a few plain facts."

"I will do just whatever you ask, because —" and the child blushed and hesitated, for she did n't know how to say it, "— because you have made me so happy. I thought I should never be happy again."

Miss Greene knew how brief childish troubles are, but she also knew that they are bitter, and she showed her sympathy by patting the little brown hand as she said, —

"Things will soon brighten."

Betty thought "things" were all rose-colored as she left Miss Greene's room. If troubles never come singly, — and they certainly had come in battalions to her lately, — she found that joys, too, come in troops.

VII

A ROOMMATE

AS Betty went lightly into her room, her face still bright from her good time with Miss Greene, she saw a pretty, refined girl of her own age sitting in a dejected attitude, looking out of the window. Her eyes opened wide with surprise; then a radiant smile came to her face. Some one was calling; how perfectly GRAND! Joyously she went up to the girl, just as one of the teachers came in and said —

"I have brought you a roommate. Miss Elizabeth Baird of Weston, Miss Lois Byrd of Baltimore."

"Oh, good! I am too glad for anything," cried the delighted girl, and seized the stranger's hand. "I have been awfully lonely."

The new girl smiled shyly and pleasantly in reply, and the teacher left them to become better acquainted.

"Has your trunk come?" inquired Betty, looking around.

"It is behind the door." Betty felt comforted by the sound of the girl's sweet voice.

"The days have been so long and so silent. I shall rearrange my things so you can have half of the closet. When I put up my duds I was not sure I should be so fortunate as to have a roommate. Luckily I don't need many hooks."

"Maybe you won't think you are fortunate when you know me better," said Lois.

"Oh, anybody would be better than to be alone, but you —" and Betty shook her head appreciatively. She was too pleased and excited to sit down, and was walking aimlessly around, when she noticed on the dressing table a copy of "Little Women," which Lois had carried to read on the cars.

"'Little Women!' Oh, I love it!" she exclaimed.

Lois's eyes grew bright. "So do I. I read and reread it," she answered.

"I am so glad you brought yours," said Betty. "I had lent mine to a girl at home,

and I could n't bear to take it from her before she had finished it, for it is simply awful not to know whether it turns out happy or not. Have you ever read 'Four Years at Lakeside'? "

" Oh, yes. Is n't it lovely! "

" Perfectly lovely," answered Betty.

" And was n't it awful the way Lillie Bent was treated at first by the other girls? "

" Well, since coming here I can sympathize with her. You would n't believe girls could be so mean as they have been to me."

" Oh, tell me! " exclaimed Lois, rapturously and admiringly.

Betty too sat down by the long, low casement window, and with much energy and telling gesticulation told her about Miriam and the challenge. It would be impossible to find a more interested listener, and the number of the " How means! " showed an intellectual and moral sympathy not wasted on Betty who, when she had finished, said, —

" I 'll ask Miss Greene to allow you to sit at our table, for there is room — but you

might find some nice girls at one of the others, though they all look alike to me.

"I want to sit with you," said Lois, decidedly. "Besides, if we are together we won't feel snubbed."

"I certainly want you, for 'A gay companion is a wagon to him that is awearied by the way.' These girls have wearied me."

To Lois's look of surprise and question she said, —

"Don't be surprised, for I am always quoting. Even father could n't break me of it. I saw that in a book last week, and I have thought of it ever since."

"But I'm not 'gay,'" replied Lois.

"Oh, I don't like gay people really. Don't you remember that Lillie Bent was 'grave and sweet'? Last night I saw a falling star and, oh, I wished for a roommate, and it has come true," she said, clapping her hands.

"I never got a wish in time for a falling star," replied Lois, "but I am always saying the same thing with some one else."

"I say 'Shakespeare,'" said Betty.

"I say 'Milton,'" said Lois. "But I think

I'll unpack now, so I'll have it off my mind," she continued.

"I'll help. Together we can unpack in a jiffy," said Betty, as she flew at the strap, which, after much tugging, they unfastened.

"Oh, what lovely dresses!" she exclaimed, as they brought out dress after dress of exquisite pattern. "I am sure there is not another girl in the school with so many beautiful things."

"I am glad you like them, but I think I have too many," added Lois, seeing Betty's scantily furnished hooks. She had conceived for Betty one of those sudden friendships not uncommon in girls of her age; but this was for her the first and enduring one. Betty felt the greatest enthusiasm in return, and thought she had the loveliest roommate in the school.

"It is just as well to have plenty here," replied Betty. "Do you know, I never thought at all about clothes, but since coming here and hearing the girls talk about my dresses (and I was so glad over them too!), and even disliking me because my things are

not stylish (that is the only word they seem to know), I have thought more about my clothes than in all the years of my life. It makes more difference to those girls whether your dress is an inch too long than whether you know your lessons."

"Perfectly horrid," said Lois.

"I never have been envious," said Betty, "but I believe I am a weenty-teenty so of those beautiful dresses. Nearly a whole closet full and not one made over!"

"I have always wanted a made-over dress," said Lois.

"Is that so? I'll lend you one of mine, for we are about the same size."

"Oh, thank you. I'd be so pleased."

"You'll soon see what they are, — half a yard too narrow, inches too short, with ruffles to piece it out, braid to hide the seams. They have to be so sponged and pressed that they never have that delicious new smell and feel."

"Oh, what a face!" exclaimed Lois, as Betty finished with a grimace. Lois had never met any one so interesting. "Your

mouth looked actually a yard long," she finished, with a laugh.

"Only a yard? Are you sure it was n't two?"

"Only one," Lois insisted.

"I am sure it was two — well, anyway, it is an *open* question;" and the two girls laughed delightedly over the pun. "If it is that long, I suppose I shall have to keep saying 'prunes and prisms' for a while."

Having finished their unpacking they dressed for dinner, and, while waiting for the bell, Lois saw Betty's picture of her mother.

"How beautiful it must be to have a mother! Mine died before I knew her," she said.

Betty stood aghast. Never knew her mother! She had never before met such a poor bereaved girl. She stood staring at her for a moment, then took up the picture,— the picture of the one who never seemed far away, so pervading was her love. She was grieved and dazed for an instant, then quickly gave the picture to Lois and said,

"Let her be your mother too; she has a

heart like — like — " and her gesture indicated the universe. " Most mothers have so many little girls, and mine has only me, and she could love so many."

Lois took the picture and kissed it tenderly.

" I must never make you regret your kindness," she said, and turned away to hide her tears, while Betty grew so energetic that she nearly tore down the wardrobe in her pretense of arranging things.

The dinner bell sounded as Betty was indulging her favorite pastime of tying hair-ribbons expertly by making the black bow on Lois's dark hair a little nattier.

" Now there, that 's just right," she said, giving it a finishing pat.

As they walked downstairs, arm in arm, Lois whispered,—

" Point out the horrid girl who said that about you. What is her name?"

" Miriam Kendall," replied Betty, also in a whisper, " but we 'll call her Orpheus because, don't you know, he is the god with the lyre, and by twisting it enough we can make it ' liar.' "

"Splendid!" exclaimed Lois.

"We can talk all we please about Orpheus and no one will know what we are talking about. So when I say at the table, 'There is Orpheus,' you will know I mean that girl," explained Betty.

As they took their places together at the table — for Lois had been given Caroline's place — every eye was fastened on Betty who, nevertheless, felt perfectly at ease, for now she had a good friend and supporter. Sustained by Lois's sweet and understanding sympathy, she had no self-consciousness, and took her place at the table with a grace peculiarly her own. She did things, not as one who watched to see how others did them, but as a born leader, and her self-confidence was the outgrowth not of ignorance but of habit.

Miss Greene introduced Lois to the different members of the table.

"She's my kind," whispered Caroline to Miriam.

"We must see that she doesn't become intimate with that hateful thing," snapped Miriam.

"The duellist," giggled Caroline.

"Good!" applauded Miriam.

Caroline turned her cold glance towards Betty and scrutinized her as one would an inanimate object, while Miriam tossed her head contemptuously.

VIII

THE DUEL — AFTER ALL

"BETTY, you have only an hour to prepare for your Latin class. Do stop fiddling with those books and get at your lesson," pleaded Lois.

"Oh, don't bother me, Lois. I am putting these books of poetry together."

"Well, it seems very foolish for you to be so indifferent when you know how much depends on this first class. I heard the girls say last evening that Miriam was going around getting all the best Latin scholars in the school to help her prepare her lesson. Jessie Bentworth said you will look pretty foolish when you get up thinking you can read Virgil; and Miriam said, 'Let's all snicker when she sits down.'"

"Let them snicker—their snickering won't hurt anybody," said Betty, lightly. "I am going to dress now, for appearances count

more than anything else here," she added rather bitterly. "Heigh-ho! Well, since you say I must change my dress, I 'll do so, though I think this black silk is good enough for anybody."

"No, you must put on that white piqué suit, and I am going to fix your hair; but just read your lesson over once, that 's a dear," said Lois, coaxingly.

"Oh, Lois, you bother me to death. I don't want to be smart, I want to be pretty," replied Betty, teasingly.

"I can't understand why you are so obstinate about it. I am just trembling like a leaf," said Lois.

"'Ho, why dost thou shiver and shake, Gaffer Grey,
And why does thy nose look so blue?'"

sang Betty, provokingly. "Now come, arrange my hair, that 's a good girl, and don't worry about the Latin part of it. You 'll see."

"Yes, I 'll see you fizzle. Well, if you do I 'll die of mortification. I almost quarrelled with Jessie Bentworth last evening over it all. They are just dying to have you fail."

"Indeed! This certainly seems to be a very *grave* occasion, judging by the condition you are all in;" and Betty laughed.

Nevertheless, in spite of her indifferent manner, she awaited the hour with impatience. She had challenged Miriam to a reading before the girls of their own table only, but as that had been prevented by Miss Greene, the result was that the first Virgil class would be practically a duel between the two before the whole school, which, as Betty recognized, would vindicate her all the more completely.

There was an air of expectation throughout the school, for word of the challenge had spread among the pupils and they were all agog to see the impertinent "new girl" put down. Even Miss Payne, ignorant of the cause, felt the suppressed excitement when she came into the main school-room, where, on a slight elevation, the Latin class recited. If it had been in one of the smaller classrooms the contest would have been witnessed by few. Now, however, every girl in the school would see Betty's discomfiture, for it

was generally believed that she had boasted unwarrantably at the table and that her meagre acquirements would soon be evident to all. Even those who were unfriendly to Miriam stood by her and wished her luck in her recitation.

Lois, whose seat was near the rostrum where she could hear every word, was white with excitement. At first Betty was not anxious, for her cousin did not seem half as terrifying as her strict father; but when the recitation had actually begun she had something akin to stage-fright. She herself became like poor Gaffer Grey, though it was not apparent to the onlookers except by her extreme paleness.

Mary Livingstone was the only girl acquainted with the whole story who was neutral. What Betty had said seemed to be pure boasting, yet the evident truth and reliability of the new girl puzzled her, and she decided to withhold judgment until after the recitation. She was eagerly alive to the excitement of the contest, and pushed her books aside to listen more at ease.

Even the usually indifferent Dorothy King could not keep fascinated eyes from the Virgil class, and she and Mary whispered and looked and whispered again. Some of the pupils in the rear of the room took seats farther front in order to hear better, and others actually stood up when the recitations began. A strange, tense, breathless silence filled the room.

Several girls had recited more or less indifferently, and the feeling of impatience was growing more intense, when Miss Payne called on Miriam to recite.

"Now," said Betty to herself, "we 'll see what that girl knows about it," and she watched her eagerly.

The eyes of the listeners shifted from Miriam to Betty and back to Miriam, watching to see how Betty was taking Miriam's reading. With her closed book on her lap, her forefinger keeping the place, Betty sat like a marble statue, though her heart sounded to her like a bass drum.

"I don't believe she can read it at all, for she is n't even looking into her book," whis-

pered Caroline to Jessie, who was mockingly watching Betty. Nothing but sheer stupidity could make a girl act so, they thought.

As was Miriam's custom she stumbled and stuttered through the lines, though on this day she did better than usual because of the help she had received. She knew the whole school would be watching the contest; and at the end she sat down with something of a flourish, for she had outdone herself.

Miss Payne suggested some changes in her translation, adding, —

"You did unusually well to-day, Miriam. That is a good beginning for the new school year."

Little suspecting how much she contributed to the dramatic action of the moment, Miss Payne next called on Betty, who sprang up, tossing her hair back from her forehead, and prepared to read.

At the sound of her clear, sweet voice, necks were craned eagerly and every eye was fastened on her. She stood there, a slight graceful girl in a simple white piqué dress, her face almost as white as the dress, in con-

trast with which the dark beautiful eyes appeared the more remarkable. Her thick flaxen hair was parted in the middle and hung in the roundhead style worn by much younger girls, an arrangement that gave a sweetness and a distinction to her face that was not lost on the pupils and made Miss Payne start with surprise. In her belt was a large red rose, stuck there at the last moment by Lois and unnoticed by Betty until she was in the class.

As she read the blood came back to her cheeks, and her interested expression showed that in the lines she loved she had forgotten the hostile, critical faces around her.

She read through the long lesson without a single correction from her teacher, her voice clear and melodious as if rendering sweet and familiar music. When she had finished, Miss Payne exclaimed enthusiastically, —

"Excellent! That is one of the best translations I have ever heard. It shows your father's thorough training. Doctor Baird is one of the great Latin scholars of

our country," she explained to the girls, "and I believe that his daughter's example will be an inspiration to you all."

"Thank you, Miss Payne," said Betty, and, turning slightly, she added, "I have read four books of Virgil," and she looked deliberately and haughtily at Miriam.

Great was the excitement in the schoolroom when she sat down, and such was the buzz of conversation that Miss Payne was compelled to ring her bell sharply for order.

Jessie Bentworth leaned over to Miriam, and asked wickedly, —

"Shall we snicker, Miriam?"

Miriam only scowled in reply.

When Betty went to her room after school, Lois jumped up from her chair to meet her, threw her arms around her, and hugged her ecstatically.

"Oh, it was glorious, glorious! I am so proud I don't know what to do."

"Ho, where's Gaffer Grey now?" asked Betty.

"Oh, do sit down now, Betty, and don't walk around like a caged lion, while I tell

you everything," begged Lois, unable herself to keep still for a second. "Every girl in that room listened. You should have seen them. Mary Livingstone clapped softly when you finished and said, 'I see she knew what she was talking about,' and she and Miss King nodded and laughed when Orpheus made such a fizzle. And I heard Dorothy say you were mighty pretty."

"Oh, no, she did n't mean me," exclaimed Betty, deprecatingly.

"Yes, she did; and Mary nodded and said, 'She makes some of the girls look like paper dolls.' Oh, you were so splendid! You looked *tall.*"

"Tall! Did I really?" she exclaimed, highly flattered. "Well, anyhow, I 'm glad it's over."

"I wonder how Miriam feels now," asked Lois, triumphantly.

"Oh, I guess she feels like that —

"'. . . young lady of Niger,
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They came back from the ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.'"

The girls were laughing merrily together when Mary Livingstone came in to speak of the Latin episode and warmly congratulate Betty on her triumph; facetiously patting her on the head, after the custom of the "reverend seniors," she said, "Good child! Good work!" and the two new girls felt truly initiated.

IX

HER FIRST RECEPTION

A MONTH had passed since the great Latin controversy, and Betty had found school life somewhat more in accord with her old dreams; for, with a roommate like Lois, and one of the older girls for a staunch supporter, as Mary Livingstone was when she had time, no girl could be utterly forlorn. However, she missed the excitement of a crowd, to which she had been accustomed in Weston; for one of the greatest charms of boarding school in her anticipations had been the chatter and hubbub and constantly changing scenes of a house full of girls of her own age. She loved people and always liked to have them near. She could study with a room full of babbling girls and enter into the conversation without effort, for she could talk and study in the same breath. In this respect

she and Lois were very different, and when Lois had to be alone it fell to Betty to turn the other girls out of the room.

The time for the first reception drew near, and Betty was troubled about her dress. Her deficiencies in matters of clothes had been so mercilessly exposed by Miriam and Caroline that even her unconcern was disturbed. She still wondered why it made so much difference, and seldom noticed what others wore; but she was too sensitive to expose herself unnecessarily to their criticisms. What should she wear? Miss Jane had been very firm and explicit in her direction as to when the lilac silk should be worn; and it was not to be worn for a small occasion like this. Her mother was not strenuous about such details, so Betty accepted Miss Jane — being a dressmaker — as an authority, and an authority that could not lightly be disregarded; but her soul loathed the black silk.

Then there was her hair! For a discouraged moment she almost determined not to go down to the reception, but it was only

for a moment; no, she could not miss that; nothing could make her miss her first reception at boarding school. Perhaps Cousin Elizabeth would remember to arrange it, as she once said she would. With her hair smooth and stylish like theirs, perhaps with a pompadour, she might pass the girls without much criticism.

She did not express these thoughts aloud, even to Lois, because she could not bear to be pitied; but she knew that all the girls regarded the arrangement of one's hair as the criterion of "smartness."

The reception evening came. Fortunately, as Betty thought, Miss Payne remembered her promise to arrange her hair; but the vexed question of the dress was still unsettled.

"What shall I wear?" she cried to Lois.

"Why not wear that pretty violet check?" answered Lois.

"But that is my Thanksgiving reception dress. I must save it for that, Miss Jane said."

"Miss Jane! Who is Miss Jane?" inquired Lois.

"Miss Jane! It seems so strange you don't know her. Why, she sews for us, and she is the dearest, crankiest old body in the world, — knits wash rags — here is one — when she can't do anything else, and gives them away. She made all my duds."

"I'd like to see her, but you must settle about your dress. Do wear the violet," insisted Lois.

"Well, mother likes me to use my own judgment in such matters, and Miss Jane will never know," added Betty, brightening, for she longed to get into that lovely, brand-new dress; and taking it down from the hook, she threw it on the bed, saying,—

"Now I must be off to Cousin Elizabeth, and be made beautiful. I'll put the dress on when I come back." At the last word she flew out of the room. She returned in half an hour, looking wholly unlike herself. In a praiseworthy effort to curb the wild, wiry mop, Miss Payne had dampened it until it was several shades darker than normal, and, after much patient manipulation, had fash-

ioned little corkscrew curls all over the pretty head.

It was a strange thing, perhaps, for Miss Payne to do, but the truth was, that, while her feeling for "good form" in general was strong, she gave little thought to such details as passing styles of hair-dressing. Her attention was attracted only by something much out of the ordinary. Such, in truth, was Betty's tangled mop of short hair, the only short hair in the school, and the sole alternative seemed to be to make it sleek.

"Oh!" breathed Lois when she saw it. "What on earth has she done to you?"

"Made me beautiful, of course," answered Betty as she stepped gingerly to the mirror, afraid of disturbing the elaborate coiffure.

"Murder!" she screamed, catching sight of her wondrous head, and sinking on the floor in a gale of mirth. She sat there rocking back and forth, her arms clasped tight, and emitting peal after peal of laughter at the fantastic image facing her in the mirror.

Lois was desperate. She knotted and

unknotted her handkerchief; she implored Betty to get up; she started to fan her hair; she dropped the fan and ran for a towel; she threw away the towel; at last she sank into the rocking chair with her arms dangling helplessly at her side.

"Oh, I could cry!" she exclaimed. "It is almost time to go down. I could shake you for laughing. Your cousin must be *crazy*. Do get up. I'll mop it with this towel and fan it. We *must* get ready; we have only ten minutes."

Betty's only response was one of her provoking quotations, delivered with grave gesture, to the image in the glass, —

> "'Oh, cobra-curled! Fierce-fangèd fair one! Draw
> Night's curtain o'er the landscape of thy hair!
> I yield! I kneel! I own, I bless thy law
> That dooms me to despair.'"

Lois jumped out of the chair. "Oh, get up. You will drive me crazy. What in the world are we going to do?"

"Why, I am going just as I am, of course," she replied, getting up nimbly.

"But you can't go looking that way."

"I can and I am. Don't you think I hate it?" she said, almost breaking down, and biting her lips to keep back the tears. "But there is nothing else to do;" and she added more calmly, "Now I'll slip on my dress and we'll go."

"Oh, Betty, you can't go that way. You'll be the laughing-stock of the place."

"Cousin Elizabeth did n't laugh."

"I should think she would have known better than to fix your hair that way."

"Perhaps she did it to keep down my pride," said Betty, her eyes twinkling and smiles again chasing one another over her face.

"But do hurry, Betty. You must let me fan it."

"No, I am going this way."

"Oh, you contrary girl," wailed Lois. "Why do you persist in anything so foolish?"

"It is this way, Lois. I care a good deal more for Cousin Elizabeth's feelings than I do for those girls who have n't spared mine; and she was really pleased over my — hair. Yes, you may look amazed, but she was, and

she 'll notice if I change it. You see, Lois, she did n't want me to look so wild, and she usually pays no attention to such little, *little* things, anyhow. Miss Greene is the one who does. Besides, I am kind of daring myself to do it."

"There! I suspected pride was at the bottom of it," said Lois, severely. "You are the proudest girl I ever saw. You hate to think you are afraid to go down there and have those girls laugh at you."

"Come, let us go down, unless you are ashamed to walk with me."

"I never desert my friends, even when they go crazy," answered Lois, nettled at Betty's perverseness.

When they came to the door of the reception-room, Lois discovered that she had left her handkerchief behind and, saying that she would be back in a minute or two, ran upstairs, leaving Betty alone at the door. She looked into the brilliantly lighted room, and her heart seemed to stop beating at the thought of walking its length to where Miss Payne stood. The company, though not

large, included many distinguished people, for Miss Payne loved lions and knew how to cage them in her drawing-room, and to-night she was unusually fortunate in having a distinguished portrait painter, several singers who were favorites with the metropolitan public, a writer of distinction, a famous Asiatic traveller, an Italian countess, and a number of prominent club women, as well as all the fashionable mothers who lived near.

The room was not yet filled, and the entrance of even a young girl could not, in those first moments of social adjustment, pass unnoticed; this Betty realized only too keenly as she waited for Lois.

"I can't go in," she said to herself in a whisper, clasping her cold little fingers together behind her, her white face quivering with dread, as she saw the laughing, handsomely-gowned figures flitting gracefully and carelessly by.

"I *must* go, and I'll go in before Lois comes, for if I am ashamed of my own appearance, I ought not to ask her to bear it

with me, after refusing her advice, too;" and, biting her underlip until it was crimson, she walked into the room.

Her appearance was greeted with smiles, giggles, and suppressed laughter by a group of girls near the door.

"Just look at Paderewski, won't you," exclaimed Miriam.

"Well, if she is n't the craziest," answered Jess, laughing and staring. Helen smiled derisively and glanced at Dorothy to see if she was laughing.

Betty flushed, but walked by them with no other sign that she heard.

"She 's too much for me," said Jess. "I know she 's no one 's fool, after the way she read Virgil and keeps up in all her lessons, but to come here with corkscrew curls, like those in Godey's Lady's Book of 1860, beats my time."

"Oh, hush, Jess! Some one will hear you use slang, and think us ill-bred," said Helen, reprovingly.

"Oh, I heard Dorothy use that only yesterday, and I thought it must be the proper

caper," answered Jess, with a tantalizing smile, for Dorothy was Helen's model.

"Oh, look at the little darling!" exclaimed Mrs. Terry, the well-known soprano, to one of the club celebrities. "She is the quaintest picture I have seen for a long time;" and she smiled on Betty, who could hardly believe that the smile was meant for her, but who instinctively smiled back and felt much better for the amenities. The color came to her cheeks, and, as her hair had almost dried in the warm room, she began to appear more natural. Miss Payne greeted her with an approving nod, and Betty, knowing that her hair had not escaped the all-embracing glance she gave her, was cheered to know that it had not been a futile martyrdom. But seeing Lois seized by the Miriam set, a sense of loneliness crept over her, and she felt angry that she could not be like other girls, and stand in the happy groups, and watch the people, and talk and laugh.

As she stood there, the famous painter saw her and asked Miss Payne to introduce him to "that little bunch of lilacs."

"Why, that is my little cousin and namesake," she answered, highly delighted, and she sent for Betty by one of the girls, who rather ungraciously delivered her message. Betty hurried over to them, and, though embarrassed at the thought of speaking to the great man, — for the girls had talked more about him than about any one else, — his kind, gracious manner soon put her at her ease, and without knowing it she told the story of the lilac dress. Under the influence of those friendly, interested eyes — eyes that nothing escaped — she talked as simply and naturally as if conversing with Lois.

A year later, a picture called "The Lilac Gown" was the *chef d'œuvre* of the *Salon*, and the fresh girlish face looking out from it was wonderfully like Betty's.

"Who is that young girl over there with the face of a miniature?" asked Mrs. Livingstone of her daughter. "I wore my hair that way when I was her age; and what a quaint dress!"

"Oh, that is the brightest girl in the

school — and the funniest," she answered, as she went for Betty.

"Oh, see Mary Livingstone's mother talking to that fright! I am surprised that Mary took her up to her, for Mrs. Livingstone is so particular," whispered Miriam to Helen Dyke.

"Have you met Mrs. Livingstone?" inquired Helen.

"No, have you?"

"No," said Helen, regretfully.

"Why, every girl in the room laughed, when that guy came in," continued Miriam.

"Are n't those curls hideous?" asked Jessie.

"Perfectly awful," they responded. Several other girls joined the group, and the conversation waxed warm over Betty's hair and dress.

"I should be ashamed to speak to her," lisped one of them.

"Why, look," said Helen, "every one is making a fuss over her."

"She fixed herself that way to be conspicuous," said the sharp-tongued Miriam.

"She is certainly deep," said Helen, with a determination to make friends with Betty as soon as possible. Mrs. Livingstone and Mrs. King were evidently making much of her and laughing as if she were saying bright things.

More than one girl at The Pines that night saw something more in Betty than a poor, uninteresting country girl. So Miss Jane's old-fashioned and countrified dressmaking, and Miss Payne's surprising ignorance of a modern girl's hair-dressing, turned to Betty's favor.

After the guests had gone, Miss Payne spoke a few words to Betty about the reception.

"Mrs. Livingstone and Mrs. King said some very pleasant things about my namesake. I am glad I arranged your hair so becomingly," she added, stepping off and admiring the effect of the tight little curls that even yet had hardly opened, so firmly had they been glued together.

"Your mother has trained you beautifully. If I had any criticism it would be that you

are apt to become excited and talk too much."

Betty told Lois that her cousin had made her feel that she had been a regular fire-cracker, "each curl going off fizz — sputter — bang!" and added, "I wish I were like you, Lois. Everything you said to-night was so sweet and appropriate."

"Oh, how can you be so silly! You were the most admired girl there — the belle. No one could hold a candle to you, corkscrews and all."

The reception was the turning-point of the roommates' life at the school. Mary Livingstone, although older than Betty and with special friends in her own class, found her extremely interesting, the more so as they both delighted in poetry, particularly in the ballads, and vied with each other in finding new ones and committing them to memory.

Jessie Bentworth told Betty in her blunt manner that it was a shame the way they had treated her, and that her own feelings had changed towards her when she found she really was n't a boaster. She had too much

delicacy to mention the unfavorable impression the country clothes had made on them; but Lois knew the cause of their prejudice, and it took her longer to feel friendly towards them than it did Betty, who found it so nice to have a friendly crowd around her that she was willing to accept their motives at their own valuation.

Following the reception, everything was bright for Betty until the beginning of the following week, when she made a new enemy, and one who, for a time, materially retarded her progress in one study. Miss Leet, the teacher of mathematics, was always more or less sarcastic to those who were not thoroughly prepared for the recitation, except to Miriam, who received marked evidences of her favoritism. Betty was weak in mathematics. Study as hard as she could she seemed to make no progress; and algebra being Miriam's favorite study, the only one, in fact, in which she was not dull, she gloried in showing her superiority over Betty. It was patent to all the girls that Miss Leet took advantage of every opportunity to enable her to do this,

with the not unnatural result that Betty conceived a hearty dislike for the teacher.

In the algebra class, on the Monday following the reception, Miss Leet, probably actuated by Betty's triumph at the reception, showed more than ever her favoritism for Miriam and her dislike for Betty, and subjected the latter to a series of comments which exhausted her stock of sarcasm. Betty's new friends, with the well-known enthusiasm of converts, were highly indignant, and as soon as the recitation was finished, repaired to her room under Lois's leadership, to hold an indignation meeting.

Betty, detained downstairs for some minutes, was thoughtfully mounting the stairs, when she saw Miss Leet, her head bent close to the door, listening so intently to the voices of the girls within that she had not heard Betty who, dumbfounded, stood stock-still for a moment, staring at her, then brushed unceremoniously past and walked into the room, closing the door with a slam. Miss Leet knocked at once, but not before Betty had time to say, "Eavesdropper — do as I

do!" and instantly a tableau was formed. As Miss Leet walked in she saw ten girls as silent as statues, standing with heads bent as if listening, each right hand forming an ear trumpet. Without a word she turned and left the room.

The girls straightened up with deep indrawn breaths, and looked at each other.

"Well, of all the mean, low, sneaking, contemptible things I ever heard of that is the worst!" burst out Betty, her face aflame, her eyes wide with indignation, her whole frame quivering with rage.

"Oh," laughed Jess, "we have known for a good while that she was doing that; but this is the first time she has been caught."

"But — but — it 's outrageous!" exclaimed Betty. "I never would have believed a teacher could do such a thing."

"Oh, she 's in a class all by herself," said Jess; and the interrupted indignation meeting proceeded with added vigor.

The numerous petty persecutions, by which Miss Leet showed to whom she attributed her severe lesson in honor, only

drew the girls closer to Betty. They felt that she was persecuted for their sake, as they all had long tried to devise some plan by which Miss Leet could be apprised that her habit of listening was known to them.

X

HALLOWE'EN

"ARE you aware, young people, what evening this is?" asked Betty of the girls who, as their custom was, had dropped into her room while waiting for the dinner hour. There were no dull moments where Betty was.

"What evening? The thirty-first of October? Oh, Hallowe'en, to be sure," cried Dorothy.

"Let's celebrate — how can we do it, Betty?" asked Lois.

"ALLOW ME TO THINK," answered Betty, grandly.

"Please don't; it's dangerous. Then it is n't allowed here in school," said Jess.

"Well, if that is a rule it is one you never break," retorted Betty.

"You're right there, Betty!" affirmed Caroline. "Jess had that rule passed so she

could graduate some time. It was her only chance." Jess's only reply was a playful dig.

"Hurrah! I have an idea!" cried Helen.

"Oh, I'm so sorry; does it hurt you, dear?" asked Jess, in a ludicrously sympathetic tone.

"Terribly," responded Helen.

"But what is it?" they all demanded.

"It is this," answered Helen, impressively. "Let those of us who are in Miss Leet's algebra class form a society of Never-Thinks and elect Betty President."

"Good! good!" they cried in chorus.

"Allow me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this unexpected honor," said Betty majestically, bowing profoundly to right and left. "But to our celebration this evening! We *must* do something."

"The best Hallowe'en stunt I ever heard of," said Jess, "is that if you go backwards into a dark room alone, at midnight, with a candle in one hand and a mirror in the other, your future husband will look over your shoulder at you in the mirror."

"Oh, that's jolly," cried Dorothy. "I'm in for that."

"Well, I can't say I am much in favor of husbands," said Mary, who had just come in, "but, for the joke of it, I'll do it."

"Who wants to see a husband?" scorned Betty. "But it would be nice and spooky."

"I know I am cut out for an old maid," said Lois, "so I'll not see any future husband."

"Miss Leet will be after us if we do it," said the cautious Caroline.

"Well, let her!" snapped Betty.

Midnight came, the midnight of Hallowe'en. The brown earth, showing through the thin covering of the fleecy flakes of an early snow, was hard and forbidding; the wind moaned and shrieked around the corners of the house, while the giant pines clashed their mighty arms together; it was one of nature's few repellent moods. It was indeed the night and the hour for supernatural influences; mystery was in the air; the great trees with their eager, ghostly branches, had

locked within them the haunting memories of the nights when elves and fairies and gnomes — their long abode opened by magic power on this one night of the year — had come forth from the solemn and majestic mountains, to disport themselves at midnight in the forest and on the green by the light of the pale winter moon, as, for one short hour, they held in elfin power this sombre, tired old earth.

"Sh-sh-sh," was all that could be heard, as eight white-robed figures glided through the dimly-lighted corridors to meet in Betty's room, their white kimonos and their unbraided hair giving an elfish, witchish appearance, as if they were indeed stealing forth from some cranny to meet a phantom bridegroom. Betty had made a garland of artificial flowers — blue forget-me-nots — and entwined them in her hair in Mad Ophelia style; and every girl had some characteristic touch in honor of the occasion.

"It's a lang and mirk night," whispered Betty, as they waited for the town clock to strike the midnight hour, for, as she said —

and she was the authority on such matters — "No influence can come from fairyland before the clock strikes twelve. That is their hour. I think I can see their fairy court now, riding through the forest over there," she continued, as they stood huddled together at the great window overlooking the park and the mountains beyond the silent frozen river. The village clock struck the hour; breathlessly they counted, — one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve! It stopped.

"Who 'll go first?" was the whispered question.

"I won't," said Dorothy. "I 'm afraid of that big empty class-room."

"I 'll go," volunteered Betty. She stood looking out of the window as if watching for her elfin knight, and then, without a word, took up the silver candlestick, the flame flickering uneasily in the slight breeze as she moved; in her other hand she held the mirror. They watched her in scared silence, as she entered the empty room and closed the door after her. Five long, shivery, scarey

minutes passed; then she came out grave and quiet.

"What did you see? What did you see?" whispered the girls excitedly.

"You remember we vowed not to tell until all had been in," Betty solemnly reminded them.

"Did you really see anything?" Mary asked her, but Betty replied only with the word, "Go," and Mary took the mirror and candle and went in.

She returned presently, shivering and white. The other girls looked apprehensive, and one or two suggested that they go back to their rooms.

"No, I am going in now," said Lois, bravely, though her voice was tremulous.

"Don't go, Lois," said Betty, thinking she was frightened. "You know this is n't a dare."

"I 'm not one of those 'fraid cats," answered Lois, and went into the dark empty room. She soon came out laughing, with her finger on her lips.

"I heard Miss Leet say to some one down

at the foot of the stairs that she thought she heard rats in the class-room, so I hurried back." The girls hardly breathed as they heard a faint, slippered tread in the hall. The candle was extinguished, and the winter moon, looking in at the casement, saw huddled there eight pretty, scared faces, with a very commonplace influence superseding the supernatural one. But with Betty the power of the old romances still held sway. Her sympathetic imagination had carried her too far into elf-land to be frightened away by any fear of discovery. She stood by the window, and felt more akin to the fairies than to her companions; she would have to wait a whole year for the strange little people to come again. She was brought back to earth by a tap on the shoulder, as Mary whispered, —

"Good-night, Ophelia. My respects to your wee, wee man."

The next afternoon the three girls who had tempted fate were besieged by the others of the Hallowe'en party to tell whether they had seen anything in the mirror. They were

all together in Betty's room. Jess dropped on the floor, Helen perched on the foot of the bed, while Dorothy, Caroline, and Belle Hunter sat on the long, wide window-sill.

"Say, Mary, that was n't a bad bluff of yours last night," announced Jess.

"Bluff? What makes you think it was a bluff?" demanded Mary.

"Why, everybody knows such things don't happen nowadays," Caroline answered, in a know-it-all tone.

"Well, if everybody knows that, why were you afraid to go in last night?" Betty asked crushingly.

"Honestly, now, did you see anything?" Jess persisted.

Betty and Mary looked at each other and shook their heads solemnly.

"You promised to tell," urged Dorothy.

"Oh, no, we did n't. We promised not to tell until all had been in," answered Betty.

"That 's true," said Mary; "and you 'll only have to wait another year to try for yourselves," she added coolly.

"You mean things! Why won't you tell?" complained Caroline.

Mary and Betty whispered mysteriously together.

"My advice to you girls is to stay in your rooms next Hallowe'en night," Mary said gravely.

"You won't be any happier if you go," was Betty's sibylline warning, and she looked unutterable things.

"As long as I live I'll remember last night," said Mary.

"Well, you are a nice pair," said Jess, as she flounced out, followed by the others.

Had they followed Miss Leet's example and listened at the door, they could have heard suppressed giggles as Mary turned to Betty.

"I did n't see a thing, did you?" she asked.

"Mercy, no!" exclaimed Betty, laughing.

"What made you so white, Mary?" Lois asked.

Mary laughed heartily. "Well, to tell the truth, a mouse about as big as the end of my thumb scampered across the floor and I

left in a hurry; but I would n't let one of those girls know it for the world."

"I was scared away by that rat Leetey," laughed Lois.

"Oh, by the way, that reminds me. There is more trouble brewing for poor old Leetey. I received a note from John this morning (he 's my youngest brother, you know), and he says some of the boys from his school are coming over to serenade us this evening. We have n't had a serenade this year."

"Oh, good. It will be my very first serenade. It will be so romantic," exclaimed Betty, rapturously, a sentiment with which Lois fully agreed.

The two wings of the building containing the dormitories enclosed a long narrow court. In the summer a beautiful fountain, tall bay trees, several marble benches, and the vine-covered walls made it a very attractive retreat; but on this night it presented a deserted appearance, for the fountain was silent, the bays had found a winter refuge in the great hall, and the marble seats and terrace were covered with a light snow. It

was, though, an ideal night for music,— moonlit, the air cold, clear and sparkling; so thought the twelve young students from the Kip Preparatory School, as they stood in the court and began the prelude to that old favorite, "The Spanish Cavalier." The mandolins, banjos, and guitars gave forth ravishing sounds in the still frosty night.

Candle-lights soon gleamed from two score windows, and subdued clappings of hands and suppressed laughter floated down to the young troubadours. Betty and Lois thrilled with the sweet strains; they were fair ladyes of old in their castle strong; brave knights were at their casement; the drawbridge was down; no enemy was in sight.

The next song gave all the girls an extra thrill.

"'Here's to the good old Pines,
Drink it down;
Here's to the good old Pines,
Drink it down;
Here's to the good old Pines,
All her girls have Gibson lines,
Drink it down,
Drink it down,
Drink it down, down, down.

Balm of Gilead, Gilead,
Balm of Gilead, Gilead,
We won't go home any more,
We won't go home any more,
We won't go home any more,'" etc.

In the midst of the affirmations of that oft-repeated last line they were rudely awakened from their romantic dreams by the appearance, at the entrance to the court, of two tall black-robed female figures, which, with much wavings of arms, "shooed," actually "shooed" the youthful minstrels.

"Shoo! Shoo! Go away! Get out! Shoo!" insisted Miss Leet's high shrill voice.

The opening to the court was narrow, and those two tall figures with long outstretched arms effectually barred it to the now panic-stricken knights. Giggles from numerous windows pursued them. Many suggestions were hurled at them.

"Buck centre," came the voice of one, a football enthusiast.

"Jump over," called another.

"Borrow an airship," advised a third.

Back and forth they ran, one brave knight

fearlessly climbing upon the window-sill, but as it led him nowhere he dropped back. At last "Duck under" was advised by some level head, and there being no other way, duck under they did and scurried across the lawn, followed by a gale of laughter. In vain the grim figures held up warning arms. The sight was too ridiculous, and "Good-night, kind sirs!" broke simultaneously from all the windows.

Betty and Lois ceased to giggle only when sleep overcame them.

XI

THE PLAY

SCHOOL life went on in quiet grooves, Betty conscientiously holding herself to her studies, which, indeed, she would be unlikely to neglect; for she realized, as forcibly as a young girl could, her great privilege in being enabled to attend such a school; and this, combined with her ambition to please her parents, led her to study faithfully. She was first in her class in every branch except mathematics, where Miss Leet's continual enmity made it almost impossible for her to overcome her natural distaste for the subject, as she might easily have done, with a teacher more friendly and interested.

But, though studying hard, Betty looked forward with delight to those regular social events, which, while their sole end seemed to be recreation, were in reality very impor-

tant parts in the students' training in social manners and usages. The next event on the school calendar was the great play at Christmas; for this year the Thanksgiving reception was to be omitted.

Betty's relations with the other girls became daily more intimate and friendly. She was the acknowledged leader of her class in every form of fun, both because of her power of leadership and because of the ingenuousness which endeared her to every one. The girls always knew just where to find her, Jess said.

With the Christmas festivities in prospect, Betty had some secret quavers over her clothes. While she knew there was little or no danger of a repetition of the extremely disagreeable experiences she had passed through, she was none the less anxious to appear well in the eyes of her exceedingly modish companions; and the prospect of having the contrast brought out again on a public occasion was very disquieting.

Her feelings, however, were much soothed

by Miss Payne's kind offer to put her violet silk into the hands of her own New York dressmaker. When it was returned, it was a new garment.

"How did she do it?" cried the delighted and amazed girl.

"Oh, Roberts is half French," replied Miss Payne, laughingly. Betty spent a silent moment in wondering what Miss Jane would say if she called her "Hufnagel," and she almost laughed aloud at the fancy. After heartily thanking her cousin she took her dress to her room.

"Now it is a beauty. It will make your dear friend Miriam open her eyes," said the pleased Lois.

The few weeks between Thanksgiving and the Christmas holidays were busy ones for the whole school, and the girls almost forgot to mark off the days from the calendar. The Christmas entertainment was always the largest and the most important one of the year. This time a play was to be given in which Betty was assigned a prominent

part, one that Miss Payne decided should be taken only by a girl in short skirts; it was the part of The New Woman.

Betty planned a fetching and original costume, consisting of a short black skirt, a mannish coat with a stiff-bosomed shirt, smart linen collar, and natty bow tie. These, with a low derby hat on her short fair hair, gave a peculiarly piquant and boyish effect. Tan riding boots with leather leggins and a little riding whip completed The New Woman of the play.

The rehearsals were always held in one of the wings of the building; the girls dressing in their rooms, then going through a small back hall and down into the auditorium. After dressing for the last rehearsal Betty decided, without any particular reason, not to go the usual route but to go through the long drawing-room, which, at that hour, was never occupied. It was simply a caprice, a mood which required something new.

Just before entering the room she twisted a little piece of paper she found in her book

into an imitation cigarette. With this held daintily between the fingers of her left hand and the natty whip in her right, and feeling like a lad of fourteen, Betty walked jauntily into the room and half-way across the floor before she saw two gentlemen sitting on the sofa in the shadow. She felt her cheeks burn. She could not turn back and her feet almost failed to carry her forward. She glanced at the figures again, and, to her horror, found that one was the Bishop and the other the dignified rector of their church. Worse and worse! Suddenly the thought came to her, "Maybe they'll think I'm a boy for sure," so she doffed her hat with a right gallant boyish swing. The churchmen responded gravely, and Betty tripped on with a light heart, believing the country was saved.

As soon as the rehearsal was over she rushed to her room to tell Lois, and, throwing herself into the rocking chair, she rocked as if her life depended on it.

"Oh, Lois, I had the greatest adventure just before rehearsal! Oh, dear, I don't

know whether to laugh or cry! But it was *so* funny! I wonder if they could have suspected."

Lois, who was curled up on the window-seat, looked up in surprise.

"Who could have suspected what? What's wrong with you, Bet? What in the world has happened? An adventure? Oh, go on and tell me, you mean thing. What was it?"

Alternately shivering with fear lest she had been discovered, and shrieking with laughter as she felt that maybe she had deceived them into thinking she was a boy, Betty told her story.

"You fooled them, you fooled them!" cried Lois, "I *know* you did. Oh, I wish I had been there! What fun! Good boy, good boy!" and she literally danced in her excitement, which so infected Betty that she jumped up and grasped her hands, and in a moment the two were in a mad whirl around the room, which exhaustion alone stopped. Then they sat down and laughed until they cried.

At dinner time Miss Greene asked Betty to come to her room before the study hour, a not unusual request, for the two had become fast friends. Joyfully she ran up to the quiet room. She found Miss Greene grave on the surface, but the twinkle in her eyes evidently indicated an undercurrent of fun.

"What is it, Miss Greene?" asked Betty.

"This afternoon, Elizabeth, I had two distinguished callers —" she began gravely, but could not finish, for the girl dropped to the floor a limp mass.

"Now I'll do just what I wanted to do then, — sink through the floor."

Try as she might to repress a laugh, Miss Greene had to give way.

"You incorrigible child, get up and listen to me."

"Not before you absolve me," cried Betty, dramatically, but getting up nevertheless.

"When I went into the drawing-room I caught my serious, dignified guests laughing like schoolboys, though they tried to stop as soon as I appeared. I have known

the Bishop since I was a child, and he loves to tease me, especially about what he calls my teacherly primness, for I have not always been such a dragon as I am now. Well, I asked what the fun was about, and it pleased the Bishop to be very mysterious.

"'I did not know that you had adopted a peculiar garb for your strong-minded young students in this Stronghold of Intellectuality,' he remarked in a tone of grave surprise, as if he had never laughed in his life. Those penetrating eyes of his never left my face, but the hilarity that seemed to emanate from our sober Mr. Carson proved that the Bishop had not been suddenly bereft of his reason; and then there were the chuckles that had fallen on my ears as I came in.

"'What do you mean, Bishop?' I implored, wholly puzzled.

"'Oh, excuse my — then it 's not general — this bewitching costume?' My mystified expression evidently delighted his wicked old heart.

"'Just before you came in, a young lady passed us dressed in the style, I should

think, of The New Woman, a riding whip and what seemed a — yes — a cigarette in her hand!'"

"Oh, Miss Greene, not a real one!"

"They knew that, dear," she replied, seeing the genuine distress on the girl's face. "They complimented you on your gallantry, and when I told them you were only fourteen, they understood that it was only a thoughtless prank, and said they were coming to see you play to-morrow night."

"Oh,

"'The "cuss" is come upon me, cried
The Lady of Shalott,'"

Betty moaned.

"You deserve a scolding for going through the parlors, but I shall say only this: don't tell any one about it."

"Oh, I had to tell Lois, Miss Greene."

"Very well; but make Lois promise not to tell."

"Oh, she would never breathe it; she's just the truest girl!"

"By the way," continued Miss Greene, "the Bishop will bring his two grandsons to

the play, and I want you to talk with them. They are good boys and great favorites of mine."

"If they are half as nice as their grandfather I 'll talk to them all right," replied Betty, glibly, her mind resting on the familiar, kindly old face.

"'*Et tu, Brute*,'" sighed Miss Greene, reproachfully.

Betty understood, and though she colored she answered stoutly, —

"A girl does n't like to be singular in every respect, Miss Greene."

"That is true," answered Miss Greene, a little sadly. She realized that Betty had borne much because of her old-fashioned dresses, and that her fine quaint language had undoubtedly seemed to the girls a part of her singularity.

"You look like a fairy," said Betty, rapturously, as Lois stood off for inspection after she had dressed for the entertainment. "That is certainly the most elegant, the most *recherché*, the most stunning dress that ever beautified The Pines."

"Is that all?" asked Lois, with affected patience, as Betty stopped for breath, then, as if oblivious of any interruption, proceeded:

"You will certainly be

> "'The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
> The observed of all observers,'"

and Betty backed up her quotation by twirling Lois around to get the best possible view of the creation. "You 'll do," was her peroration.

"It is a good little dress," said the preoccupied Lois, "but what 's a dress if one 's going to act like a dunce? I know I shall forget my recitation to-night."

"You simply can't forget it," answered Betty, emphatically. "I asked you suddenly last night to recite during all the noise the girls were making, to see if you would be upset, and you did it perfectly."

"That was a good test," said Lois, brightening, "but then this will be different. Think of all the strangers who will be there! Oh, my! I am selfish to worry over my little part," she added, "when you have so

much — all those words in the play and the acting too — but you always come out ahead."

"Well, if my tongue proves as unruly as my heart is just now — it 's up in my throat — a very inconvenient place for it — I 'll be packed off double quick to a school for stutterers." Lois looked surprised.

"Why, you are not frightened, are you?"

"I 'm clammy with fear;" and though Betty laughed, Lois knew she was doing her best to keep her courage up to the sticking point.

"You 'll come up and help me to change my dress after the play, won't you? For my fingers will all be thumbs, as Miss Jane says."

"Indeed I shall. I am anxious to have the girls see you in that dress as it is now. It is lovely and so becoming."

"I am glad it is fixed. Cousin Elizabeth was so pleased when I told her how ravishing it is. If she were n't so busy I think she would be nearly as funny and good to us as Miss Greene, but —" and Betty shook her head — "next to the Mother there is no one like Miss Greene for understanding."

Lois had finished dressing, and was sitting on the window-seat, alternately groaning and reciting her poem.

Betty rambled on while she put the finishing touches to The New Woman's suit.

"I wonder whether the Bishop will know me when I am changed into a little girl."

"I wonder what his grandsons will be like."

"Oh, hateful, as all boys are, teasing and rude. However, Miss Greene says these are particularly fine, and maybe there is some hope for them."

"I don't know many boys," answered Lois, thoughtfully. "Those I do seem very nice and quiet."

"You ought to meet some of the Weston boys," exclaimed Betty, hotly. "They send you comic valentines and mimic you! Edith and I just pass them by with scorn, our noses up in the air. But," she went on enthusiastically, "if these boys are like Bishop Waborne they'll be splendid. Am I all right?" She was dressed in her New Woman's suit with a yellow rose in her

button-hole; she looked extremely pretty and interesting.

"Well, you 're a wonder! You can wear anything," said Lois. "Oh," she continued with a groan, "if my recitation were only over I would be happy."

"'T is never too late for delight, my dear,'"

quoted Betty.

Mary Livingstone had been assigned the leading part in the play; to this her age and standing in the school entitled her. The other parts were distributed among the better known girls of the different classes. Of these Betty had one of the most prominent, and the fact that a new girl had been selected for it caused a good deal of envy and excited comment among the less fortunate.

"Why should Bet Baird be in the play?" asked Caroline of Miriam.

"Oh, she 's Miss Greene's pet, as every one can see," answered that sweet-natured girl.

"Some one said she is related to Miss Payne," said a girl standing by.

"Never in the world, — that country girl!" protested Miriam.

"Well, 'that country girl,' as you call her, Miriam, is growing mighty popular; and she certainly comes within an ace of being the cleverest girl in the school. Even Leetey had to own up that she was pretty when I asked her," said Jessie, in her teasing way.

"Jess Bentworth, I am surprised at you. Did you have the impudence to ask Miss Leet such a question when you know how trying that country girl is to her?"

"'That country girl,'" again quoted Jess, maliciously, "would n't be so trying in algebra if Leetey were fair."

"I did n't know that you too had become a victim of that designing snip," retorted Miriam.

"Oh, I have n't become a victim, but I do like a girl who can read — Virgil as well as she can." At this there was a cold-hearted giggle at Miriam's expense.

"'Dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 't is their nature to,'"

said Mary Livingstone, as she passed the angry Miriam and the cool, tormenting Jess.

"Wait, Mary, I'll go with you," cried the exasperated Miriam, glad to get out of the clutches of the greatest tease in the school. As Miriam walked off with Mary she saw Betty coming towards them arm in arm with Dorothy.

"You can't budge an inch without seeing that hateful thing," muttered Miriam.

"Now, Miriam," said the philosophical Mary, "you can't keep down a splendid girl like Betty;" and, turning directly towards her, she added emphatically, "you only make yourself disliked by trying."

The play was a success. Betty astonished every one by her spirited interpretation; for while her lines were no more important than several others', so vivid was her presentation that in the eyes of the audience she assumed a place fully equal to Mary's. This was due largely to her old childish habit of "make believe," which she had kept much longer

than the majority of girls. Before the hour set for beginning she had gone off alone for a while and imagined herself into the part.

The Bishop was carried away by her spirited acting and applauded as vigorously as his young grandson Reginald, with whom he fully agreed that she was "great." He had a humorous recollection of the blushing young face of the day before, and it gave him the interest one feels in an acquaintance. Betty caught a glance from his keen eyes, shining young and blue out of the florid, weather-beaten, white-crowned face. His eagle nose and thin compressed lips showed the man of iron will. He possessed in a marked degree that look of authority which comes after many years of executive power; but over his stern features radiated a smile so bright and glancing, so kind, that Betty, in speaking of it to Miss Greene, likened it to the waters of a spring rippling over a rock. The latent fire of hero worship was kindled, and Betty found in the Bishop a hero.

When she had changed back into the little girl of fourteen, a "little bunch of lilacs," Miss Greene took the roommates up to him, and the Bishop thought he had never seen a dearer little face than the one looking up so shyly into his. Betty had, in three and a half months, discovered that it was not necessary for her to make conversation, — something she had had much trouble to learn. She now had a great desire to say something witty to her hero, but as nothing came to her she did not give herself any anxiety about being entertaining, as she would have done formerly. Miss Greene had seen this haste to "make conversation" — the outgrowth of her leadership and a detestation of things poky — and had impressed on her a quotation from her favorite novelist, one too deep and difficult for Betty to read; but the wisdom of the quotation was not obscure even to a girl of fourteen.

"Preserve your composure until you have something to say. Wait for your opening; it will come and the right word with it. The main things are to be able to stand well, walk well, and look with an eye at home in its socket."

Knowing Betty's temptation in excitement "to pump up her wit," Miss Greene enlarged on it and applied it with friendly remorselessness. While Betty's ready wit and originality, combined with more sterling qualities, had won the schoolgirls, to the tired, world-worn Bishop her pretty quiet way of looking up at him had more attraction than repartee. The Bishop enjoyed a good joke, though it was said that his own were only passable, and to-night with his young grandsons, lads of fifteen and seventeen, he was the youngest of the group.

"You children talk here while I speak to Miss Payne and the other folks I know. When I come back I 'll tell you a first-class story. Come, Miss Greene. Paul, here, is studying for the priesthood; he 'll be chaperone. Besides, The New Woman does n't need one."

As he said this, the Bishop placed his white, firm, Episcopal hand on the shoulder of a tall, slender, handsome youth, with a pale face lighted up by the spirit of an enthusiast, then moved off in his joyous, stately fashion.

"He always says that," grumbled Paul.

"He! Who's he?" asked Betty, pertly. She thought he should speak more respectfully of his splendid old grandfather. The boy turned away proudly, vexed and hurt. It is hard to tell when boys are hurt, they hide it so carefully. Betty decided that he was a sulky fellow, and as such he was especially displeasing to her. "Better have them rude and teasing, if one must have them," she thought, as she started away. She had gone only a step or two when Paul called to her, half commanding, half pleading, —

"Please excuse me."

"Oh, certainly," she said casually; then glancing at the big boy and seeing something that made her sorry for him, her kind little heart relented and she came near him again and began asking him all sorts of questions rather teasingly.

Would n't he *please* tell her about his work? Was he going to be a *priest?* Was he high church? Ought she call him *Father?* She hurled these questions at the lad until he did n't know what to

do. He tried to be tactful, but blundered terribly.

"I am only a student," he said at last, "and I think you would find a description of our work much more interesting than church history."

"Oh, I love church history; I was reared on it," exclaimed Betty.

"But this is no place for a serious discussion," replied the desperate youth.

"But ought you lose an opportunity for enlightening me?" At this he looked decidedly grumpy, which did not surprise her, for to her all boys were alike unamiable.

"Perhaps you don't approve of acting," she suggested primly.

"I enjoy Shakespeare, when he is faithfully portrayed," Paul replied in a cold, impersonal voice.

"Oh, I have never seen him paint — oh, I mean portrayed," she answered exasperatingly, for she thought him affected.

"The play to-night," she continued, "must have been painful to — one like you." This

ambiguous remark made the serious youth glance at her to read its meaning.

"Did you find your part congenial? Do you like a mannish woman?" he asked abruptly.

"But I am only a little girl," she answered, laughing. "At least they won't let me have long skirts, though I beg hard." Looking into the ascetic's eyes she saw there much seriousness but little humor. He would not be diverted.

"I 'm not much older than you and I would not condescend to take a womanish part."

"Oh, I should hope not!" cried Betty, concealing her desire to laugh at the idea of this stately youth in such a frivolous guise.

"She has nice feelings," thought Paul, who took himself tremendously in earnest. He brought her a chair.

"My grandfather told me about seeing you yesterday."

She reddened and exclaimed spiritedly, —

"It was n't fair of him! It is n't fair to make people ashamed of things there is n't any wrong in."

"Anyway, you have won his heart," Paul said apologetically.

"Why, it was wonderful that he should speak of me," said the girl, her eyes wide with surprise. It seemed as if some great statue, with its head in the clouds, had spoken of her.

"We have lived with grandfather and grandmother ever since our mother died."

"Oh, how awful!" exclaimed Betty.

"Awful to live with grandfather?" inquired the surprised Paul.

"Oh, no. That is beautiful. But, not to have a mother! Lois has n't a mother, either. I don't see how people live without them."

"We were too young to feel it; and our grandparents have been everything to us. Father's business compels him to travel a great deal."

To Betty he was some one to be sorry for, just as Lois was.

"What a smart little piece your friend is," said Reginald to Lois, looking towards Betty.

"Piece!" repeated Lois in surprise. But looking into his merry blue eyes she saw that in his boyish fashion he had expressed genuine admiration for her friend.

"I never," he continued in his happy young voice, "saw a girl go through a thing the way she did that to-night, and grandad said so too. And she 's only fourteen. Why, I 'm a year older than that, and I could n't begin to do it. Did she ever do it before?"

"No, this was her first time."

"Gee whiz!" gasped the boy; and the two talked on, having a congenial subject.

"You are going home to-morrow, I suppose," said Reginald to Betty.

"I am thankful to say I am," she answered.

"You are coming back?" asked Paul, in a peremptory manner.

"If I must," she answered, wholly nettled at his air of disapprobation.

"You, then, find school irksome, and would like to escape?" pursued Paul, in his earnest way; scolding, Betty thought it.

"'. . . all the world round,
If man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be found,'"

she quoted her favorite defence wearily in answer, as the Bishop approached to make his adieus.

The two girls were silent until they reached their room, when Betty burst into a flood of tears. She was overwrought from the strain of the play and the excitement following it. Half laughing, she made her defence.

"I am only a little country girl, after all. See how you bear it."

"Yes, but I didn't have half to do that you had."

"Your recitation was perfect. I was so proud of you."

"With your triumph you can afford to be generous," said Lois.

"That big boy didn't like it," answered Betty, dejectedly.

"His grandfather did, and his brother thinks you are wonderful."

"Oh, he does n't know anything. He 's only six months older than I am — I asked him — and I don't care what he thought. But the Bishop's nice compliments did puff me up a little."

XII

AT HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

SHE was going home for Christmas! Oh, joy! On the train her heart sang in unison with the click of the wheels on the rails. Christmas had always been a wonderful event for her, but now it meant not only that, but going home, after four months' absence, to father and mother and Edith and Miss Jane and Elder Huggentugler, and the others.

Betty was met at the station by her father, behind whom stood Edith and all the girls of the old crowd. They were eager to see in what way she had changed, for they fully expected a great difference. When she got off the car they saw her in the very same clothes she had worn when she went away, but, oh, the hat was so new and stylish! Any one could see that it came straight from New York! Her joy on seeing them

proved that she had not grown proud; there was a settled belief among them that boarding schools make girls "stuck up."

Betty and her father walked on ahead, while the escort of honor, consisting of Edith, May, Ada, Jane, Martha, and Sallie, followed close behind. She looked back every minute or two to say something to her followers, and in between times they discussed her.

"She is taller," said Edith.

"She is pretty — I did n't know she was pretty," said May.

"Where in the world were your eyes?" asked the loyal Edith.

"Her hat is becoming," contributed Ada.

A few gay words from Betty and the inventory would continue.

"She 's just as cute as ever," avouched Jane, after one of Betty's speeches over her shoulder.

"I wonder if she has any new poetry," said Edith; and she ran on ahead to ask, coming back joyfully to announce that she had a great deal, and some new songs too.

"She will sing and recite at our Christmas entertainment, and, oh, girls, SHE WAS IN A PLAY!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the group in a long-drawn breath.

When Mrs. Baird had Betty in her arms she said to herself,—

"I can never, never let her go away again;" and Betty felt that she could never leave. Old Kittie showed all her shining teeth as she welcomed her with a loving scolding.

"Hurry up now, chile. Ev'ryting 'll be dead cole, ef you doan git a move on you."

There was her favorite jelly on the table, and holly leaves and berries added to the cheer.. It was a royal home-coming.

For ten days her tongue hardly ceased. Every detail of her life at The Pines was rehearsed for the satisfaction and amazement of all willing listeners. Of course her mother was always there, and was a glad listener to things she had heard a

dozen times, and each time with a glow of satisfaction, or indignation or surprise, whatever the emotion the story demanded; but the slights on account of her clothes Betty told only to her mother.

Her father stole downstairs from his study again and again to listen without comment to the school stories, his pale face flushing with pride when she related her Latin triumphs, triumphs she had not thought much about until she found how they pleased her parents.

Betty never allowed anything to lose by the telling. She was truthful, yet she was, above all, graphic. She delighted in lively narrative, and she made the girls' hair stand on end as she described the midnight frolics.

Miss Jane came to see her with eyes alight with pleasure, and snapped out,—

"Well, I carc'llate you're more stuck up 'n ever."

"Oh, Miss Jane," remonstrated Betty, with an assumed offended air, raising her hands protestingly. "I thought you would be so

glad to see me, and you begin to scold the first thing."

"I can't begin too soon," she replied, shaking her head sagely, while she rummaged through her bag for her knitting and spectacles. When she had adjusted her glasses and settled herself to her knitting, sitting up straight as a ramrod, she looked over her glasses complacently at Betty, who was talking to Edith and showing her photographs of the schoolgirls.

"I guess, 'Lizbeth, there was n't many better dressed girls 'n you at that high tunned school of yourn, was they?"

"High? Nothing but the tower," answered Betty who wanted to avoid reference to her clothes. She had not brought home her lilac silk, as she felt it would hurt Miss Jane to see the alterations made so soon. She could in fancy hear her criticism of certain rough inside seams and the complacent comparison with her own neat finish.

"Highty-tighty!" answered Miss Jane; and Mrs. Baird, knowing Betty's purpose, sent her out on an errand.

"That child is changed, Mrs. Baird. 'Lizbeth's different. She is still a colt, but a tamed one."

At the Christmas entertainment of the Sunday-School, Betty recited and sang. Usually the program was a pretty slow affair, but this night it was given color and dash by her personality and her gifts in music and recitation. Her several numbers were received with great applause, particularly the last, a recitation which, accompanied by her vivid dramatic action, caused great excitement, so great, indeed, that Mr. Jones, solemn and red, short and rotund, approached her in an embarrassed manner, and, extending his right arm as he swung off to one side, dropped into her outstretched hand three pink peppermints; while Elder Huggentugler turned around, and, tilting back his chair and reaching back to her over the intervening shoulders, tossed into her lap a "poke o' peanuts" with the words, —

"Betty, you done beautiful."

The ten days flew by all too swiftly, and Betty found herself once again at The Pines. Miss Greene welcomed her with evident satisfaction.

"I was afraid they would keep you," she said. "Bishop Waborne has been asking about you. He says Reginald contends that you are the first girl he ever knew who was equal to a boy."

"'Hope not for mind in women,'" was her indifferent comment.

"I think I shall have to spend this year in trying to break that habit of quoting, Elizabeth," said Miss Greene, semi-seriously.

XIII

A FEAST, A TRIAL, A NEW TEACHER

THE monotony of school routine, to which the roommates had become accustomed during the fall term, now, after ten free, joyous days at home, returned to them with redoubled force. Something must be done to relieve it, so they decided to give a midnight feast, always a thrilling performance.

There was a great deal of make believe about these feasts. The girls tried hard to ignore what they fully recognized, — that they were not so much a break for liberty as they seemed to be. Yet they were outlets for youthful spirits, — perhaps a little too repressed in the regular life of the school, — and a certain number were always expected during the year and considered by the teachers things to be winked at, since ordinarily they involved no infraction of any important rule of the school.

So, two weeks after their return, Betty sent out cabalistic invitations, illuminated in red and gold after the fashion of an old missal in the library, —

> At the Sign of the Moon,
> At the Hour of the Fairy Ring Dance.

By the exercise of their wits they contrived to smuggle in what they fondly regarded to be abundant supplies for a fair banquet. After dinner they were congratulating themselves upon their success, when suddenly Betty threw up her hands, gave a groan, and dropped into a chair. Lois was frightened.

"Oh, dear, Betty, what is the matter? Are you sick?"

Betty's look of distress was almost dissipated by the laugh in her eyes.

"Oh, Lois! It 's all spoiled! Who ever heard of a feast at The Pines without charlotte russe, and here we 've entirely forgotten it."

Lois looked aghast, and she too dropped into a chair.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! It

will not be worth keeping the girls up for," she said dolefully.

"Yes, and I really boasted about it to Mary and Dorothy, right before Miriam too. She, by the way, declined to come. I'm glad of it, too."

"So am I," agreed Lois, heartily.

"But what are we to do, Lois, what are we to do? The girls are scattered all around on different floors, and — oh, I know what I'll do!" and Betty straightened up and clapped her hands gleefully.

"Oh, what is it?"

"You know that little shop kept by that nice old woman just outside the gate? She and I are great friends, and I can get them there. I'll dress up like an old woman and get out through the kitchen. Lizzie is there, and she'll do anything for us. I'll not be afraid, for the night watchman is on the grounds and he'll think I'm one of the servants."

"I'll go with you."

"No, you must n't. There is less risk with one."

"I'll watch you from our window."

"Well, you may do that, though there's really nothing to fear, with old John out there, and I can talk loike anny ould Oirish leddy."

Electrified by the scheme, Betty went merrily to work. She knotted her hair into an untidy roll, wisps straggling out here and there; on her head was an old untrimmed hat tied under her chin by a frayed ribbon; on her feet a forlorn pair of overshoes; a faded green shawl and long, bedraggled petticoat completing an effective disguise. With a small basket on her arm she sallied forth.

She crept down through the servants' hall into the dining-room, through which she expected to escape in safety to the kitchen. The dining-room was dark, and she started to grope her way towards the kitchen door, a long distance to make without a board creaking; she had traversed, perhaps, half the distance when the dining-room door was suddenly flung open and revealed Miss Leet peering into the room, the light from the hall shining directly on the kitchen door.

Crouching behind one of the tables Betty hoped Miss Leet would soon leave, but the latter, swinging the door back still farther, propped it open with a chair, then began to wander up and down the hall, leaving Betty greatly puzzled to know what to do next. She saw that she could not get out by the kitchen door, so, finding herself near a window, she waited until Miss Leet was at the farther end of the hall, then opened it quietly, dropped her basket to the ground, and clambered after it.

She was half-way down the walk, and was breathing freely again, when she suddenly came upon the old watchman, whose vigilant eyes she had hoped to escape.

"Och, thin, where do yez be goin' this toime o' noight?" he inquired.

"Yez would n't be afther interferin' wit' an' ould woman, would yez?" Betty answered in her richest brogue.

"Oi disremimber havin' seen yez afore. How long hev yez bin here?"

"Oh, I 'm just afther stayin' here a whoile wit' some ould frinds."

Betty pushed him away as he chucked her under the chin.

"Arrah, be aff wit' yer monkey thricks," she protested, as she ran off as fast as her old shoes and long dress would allow her, while she determined to elude him on her return trip.

Having procured the things she needed she trudged back to school. As old John was pacing his accustomed beat Betty took another path; but she did not entirely escape his observation.

"Looks loike some wan movin'," he muttered, and walked towards her. She hid behind a big tree just in time, the darkness under it aiding her. Believing that his eyes had deceived him the watchman continued his round, turning frequently to assure himself that there was no loiterer within the sacred precincts.

As soon as his back was turned Betty darted out and reached another big tree, when John stopped and turned, listening attentively. She was breathless from excitement and fear of discovery; yet she enjoyed

"At the Fairies' Hour, from twelve to one, eight fairies entered the room. *Page* 169.

the chase. The old man walked in her direction, muttering to himself, until he was so close that he actually rested his hand on the tree behind which she was hiding. He peered in all directions, but did not think to look so near home for what he was seeking. Betty was in a shiver. This was certainly too close for fun. If he came around the tree her chances for escaping were small, but to her great relief she heard him mutter, —

"Must hov bin the threes movin', I saw;" and he walked towards the front of the house, while Betty made her way to the kitchen door. She hurried up the stairs, meeting no one, rushed into the room where Lois had been watching her strategic movements from the window, and threw herself on the bed to recuperate.

At the Fairies' Hour, from twelve to one, eight fairies entered the room, one after the other, led by Mary Livingstone, who had on a bright blue kimono, strings of Christmas-tree decorations and pop-corn encircling her neck, and toy rings on her fingers.

She made a dazzling picture in the candle-light.

Dorothy was in black, with silver paper stars hung around her neck and sewed on her kimono; a great silver crescent moon in her hair completed the captivating costume emblematic of night.

Lois wore a pink velveteen robe and a silver paper crown in her hair, giving her the air of a princess.

As might be expected, Jess had a touch of the grotesque in her costume, which was a bright crimson kimono with a red peaked cap and other Mephistophelian touches.

Helen and Caroline were two fairies with light unbraided hair, dressed alike in pink, and with pink artificial roses as girdles.

Betty had brought from home, for just such an occasion, an old black brocade gown of her grandmother's. It had a short empire waist, half low neck and short sleeves, and a broad lace collar fastened by an old cameo pin; the hoops were small but sufficiently large to give the proper effect; her yellow hair was piled on top of her head and sur-

mounted by an old-fashioned tortoise-shell comb.

At one end of the room hung an old red lantern, a recognized fixture of midnight feasts at The Pines; at the other end, on a small table, stood a huge, stuffed black cat, their mascot. Two pairs of tin candlesticks stood on the tablecloth which was spread on the floor. A great bowl of red roses formed the centrepiece, and one rose lay at each plate, their artificiality being not too glaring in the candle-light. The plates formed an odd collection, gathered from all sources. The butter was in its own special wooden tray, made resplendent by a gorgeous paper napkin, decorated with wreaths of red roses. The sardines reposed in the native silver cans, the pickles in their own lovely Bohemian glass bottles; two large silver loving cups (in common parlance, tin buckets), with red roses tied to their handles, furnished the drinking vessels, aided by an odd tumbler or two. Tied to each rose at the plates was a place-card bearing these words, with illuminated initials, —

And now they throng the moonlit glade,
Above — below — on every side,
Their little minim forms array'd
In all the tricksy pomp of fairy pride.

After a series of mystic incantations, insisted on by Betty as proper to such a great occasion, the feasters took their appointed places and "fell to" (as Jess called it) with much subdued jollity. The time passed very quickly, and the town clock boomed out one o'clock long before they expected it; accompanying it came the usual chanticleer chorus, with the comment from Caroline, —

"I wonder why roosters always crow just at one o'clock."

"Because they are natural chronometers," flashed Betty, which caused a ripple of laughter impossible to stifle.

"Hush, girls. Old Leetey will hear us," cautioned one.

"Yes, she will be only too glad of a chance to crow over us," agreed another.

As the magic power leaves at one o'clock, the fairies flitted to their rooms, to be surprised on the way by an ogre, Miss Leet.

"Miss Payne will hear of this to-morrow," she announced grimly.

"How did she happen to come up here?" the girls asked one another, for Miss Berry and Miss Smith were the teachers on that floor; and that was the question that disturbed more than one girl's rest that night.

The next morning Miss Payne called out the names of those who had been caught, and told them to come to her room. Betty and Lois were not mentioned among them, as they had not been seen by Miss Leet; but, nevertheless, they went with the others.

"I didn't ask for you two," said Miss Payne, when she saw them.

"Is it about last night, Miss Payne?" asked Betty, going right to the point.

"It is," she answered shortly.

"Lois and I came in, Miss Payne, because the feast was held in our room. I suppose that was why Miss Leet did not see us."

"Miss Leet had an intimation that there was to be this violation of the rules, but she

did not know what room it was to be in," explained Miss Payne.

The principal's estimate of the gravity of the affair was indicated by the lightness of the punishment inflicted, — to memorize Gray's "Elegy" within the week.

As they left the room twelve angrier girls could not be found; even Caroline Wren was stirred to deep resentment, and her usually unchanging blonde face became crimson. The bored Dorothy was excited enough to gesticulate violently, and, of course, Helen was following suit. Lois was pale and weak from emotion, while Mary's brown eyes flashed and her lip curled scornfully. As for Betty, well, she was haranguing the group, her hair standing on end from running her fingers through it, her cheeks flushed angrily.

It would not be hard to guess the cause of the turbulence; certainly it was not the words of the preceptress nor the easily memorized poem; the storm centred on the absent-minded words of Miss Payne: "Miss Leet had an intimation that there was to be this violation of the rules." Who, questioned

they, had been mean enough to tell her? Suspicion turned to Miriam. It came out that to harm Betty she had done many underhanded things, small in themselves but telling largely against her at this crisis.

"I saw her talking with Miss Leet only yesterday," said Helen.

"I saw her, too," chimed in Jess, "and they stopped until I got by, though I heard Bet's name; but I did n't dream it was any sneaking business like this."

"Well," said Caroline, "I have always been Miriam's friend. I cease to be so from this day. I now see some things in a very different light, — something she said to me yesterday. Begging me not to go to the feast looks mightily suspicious. I thought it was just her jealousy of Betty."

"It could n't have been any one else," said Mary, emphatically.

"The question is, girls, what are we going to do about it?" demanded Betty. "She may be innocent. Let us ask her."

"Ask her!" they exclaimed. "Why, a tell-tale will lie."

"It means fair play," answered Betty. "We 'll put her on trial. Who will bring her here?" she asked, as hazy memories of the trial of Warren Hastings, which she had loved to read, floated through her mind.

"You be the judge, Betty," they demanded.

"I am not sure that I can be impartial," she protested.

"Well, we 'll be the jury and decide the question," said Lois.

"Who is going for her?" asked Dorothy.

"I 'll go," volunteered Jess, and went out. In a few minutes she returned with Miriam, who seemed very sullen. Around the room sat nine solemn girls, Judge Betty in a high-backed chair facing the door.

"Did you tell Miss Leet about our feast last night?" she demanded abruptly.

"What right have you to ask?" sneered Miriam.

"We want to give you a chance to declare your innocence. We have good reasons for suspecting you. If you are innocent say so, and then we will go about finding the guilty — sneak." The last word was hardly worthy

of a judge, but her indignation grew as she spoke.

"I refuse to answer," said Miriam, stubbornly.

"You ask her, Dorothy. Perhaps she 'll answer you."

"I don't care to have her speak to me," said Dorothy, scornfully, and walked out of the room. Miriam tossed her head.

"Let 's not say anything more about it," said Betty; and Miriam left the room.

"For pity's sake, what made you shut up that way," demanded Jess.

"Oh, I thought she had enough after Dorothy said that. Then, too, I suddenly had a feeling that Leet wormed it out of her. *I don't believe even Miriam would deliberately tell on her best friend just to spite me.*" Betty spoke in italics and made some impression in Miriam's favor.

"Well," said Mary, "that may be as you say, but why did n't she warn us when she found old Leetey knew about it? She evidently tried to warn Caroline."

"Yes, she did," said Caroline, reluctantly,

evidently disliking her position as the best friend of the most unpopular girl in the school.

"Well, I certainly don't like Miriam, but I despise that Miss Leet. She 's a snake in the grass. I wish we could get her out of the school," said Betty.

"How could we manage it?" asked Lois.

"Tell Miss Payne about this Miriam affair. She hates underhanded methods," said Jess.

"I don't like telling," said Betty. "We might all fail regularly in our history when she has the class. We can't do it in algebra because I fail, anyhow. Perhaps she will understand and will be only too willing to leave The Pines."

"Good scheme! I am not in your class so I can't add to her sufferings," said Mary, regretfully.

"Most of us are, and we 'll all say, 'I am unprepared' day after day until she reports it to Miss Payne; then, when she asks us about it, we 'll tell her we can't recite to such a — person," explained Betty.

"I can't see the difference between that

and going to Miss Payne at once," said the practical Belle Hunter.

Betty looked at her pityingly.

"We show Leet in the plainest way that we do not respect her, and force her to tell on herself by telling on us, for she will know the real reason, you may be sure."

"Well, I can't see any great difference yet, but I am willing," said Belle.

The next history class was exciting. Jess was called on first and in a clear tone responded, "Not prepared." Miss Leet looked at her, saying, "Wait after class hour;" then she called on Lois, who also responded, "Not prepared." Miss Leet, showing some surprise, told her, too, to remain.

Caroline also joined in the refrain, "Not prepared," and was greeted with "I am not surprised, but you, too, may remain after class. Now, Miriam," she went on sweetly.

As the latter recited every girl looked coldly away. She had taken her accustomed seat next to Caroline, who steadily refused to notice her. Then came Dorothy, who was also "Unprepared."

"She looks as if she smells a rat," whispered Jess to Betty, who in reply quoted softly and compassionately, as she looked at Miss Leet,

"'In all the endless road you tread
There 's nothing but the night, — and unprepared.'"

"Elizabeth Baird," called Miss Leet, sharply as the whisper fell on her ears. Betty turned her head slowly and looked at her with cool imperturbable eyes.

"What were you saying?"

"Only a line of poetry."

"Repeat it."

"'In all the endless road you tread
There 's nothing but the night, — and unprepared.'"

"Leave the room," commanded the angry teacher, and, after a few more "unprepareds," she dismissed the class.

This continued for a week, and Miss Leet, unable to stand the strain, told Miss Payne, giving, as the probable reason for their conduct, her report of the feast. She named Betty as the ringleader. The history class was called to Miss Payne's room.

"Young ladies, I have been told by Miss Leet that, since she faithfully reported your breaking of the rules, you have refused to recite in her history class. What is the explanation of this insubordination?" She looked severely at Betty who trembled, but managed to answer in a firm voice, —

"We do not care to recite to Miss Leet."

"I do not catch your meaning;" and Miss Payne's voice showed amazement and displeasure.

"It is this way, Miss Payne. Miss Leet has been going around listening at our doors. We know that because we caught her at it. No girl in the school would deliberately have told her about our feast, and we are sure she wormed it out of one of them. If we had been fairly caught by one of the teachers on that floor we would n't have cared a bit, but to have Miss Leet go at it in such an underhanded way was more than we could stand, and we decided we would not recite any more history to her."

Miss Payne studied the girls' faces thoughtfully for a while, then she said, —

"I shall inquire into this and see you again if necessary. You are dismissed."

Miss Leet secured another position and soon left The Pines, to the great rejoicing of the pupils.

The next morning Betty said to Lois, —

"I am going to tell Miss Payne this morning about going out for those things the other night. I should n't have done that. You know we are strictly forbidden to go outside of the gate without permission. I don't know why I did n't think of it that way before, but I suppose it was this excitement about Miss Leet. I wonder what Miss Payne will do to me. Oh, dear, I hope she won't send me away from school. What would mother think!"

"Send you away from school for a little thing like that!"

"It was n't a little thing, Lois. The feast itself was n't so bad, but to dress up like that and go outside of the gate was, and you know it. I am going down right now and tell her and have it off my mind."

"I am going with you."

"What for?" asked Betty, in surprise.

"Because I was in it as much as you were. The only reason I didn't go with you was because you wouldn't let me."

"Well, you are *not* going now."

"I *am*, and you can't keep me from it this time;" and she went.

Miss Payne heard the story, contritely told, and looked very grave indeed.

"I am exceedingly sorry to hear this, Elizabeth. You know how strict our rule is about going outside the grounds; and to think of your going out that way at night! I fear I shall have to punish you severely. I must ask you not to go out with the other pupils on Saturday afternoons for the rest of the term. And you," she added, turning to Lois, "must not go out for a month;" and with some kind words she dismissed the two humbled girls.

The teacher who took Miss Leet's place was Miss Spice — to the roommates her name was suggestive of pleasant home cheer — a wholesome, practical, intellectual woman

of sterling character, with the saving graces of humor and sympathy. The pupils at once dubbed her "spice cake."

A few days after her arrival Miss Greene invited her to her room, and over a friendly cup of tea they fell to discussing the pupils whom Miss Spice was eager to understand in order to do effective work. Betty, always interesting to Miss Greene, occupied a large part of their conversation.

"You will find her decidedly deficient in mathematics. Miss Leet's antagonism increased her natural distaste. We are all anxious to have her improve, for it is the only branch in which she is behind her class. If you can win her regard she will work hard to please you, for she is a conscientious student as well as a devoted friend," Miss Greene explained.

"Her bright face attracted me," replied Miss Spice, "and I wondered at her failure in the class. I shall be doubly interested in her now. I judge she is a born leader."

"She seems to care very little for managing people or affairs, but she is fond of the

picturesque and poetic. Her chief power lies in doing things in a way different from the humdrum, and girls like it. Then, too, she enters heart and soul into everything she undertakes and inspires others. There is no gray in her color scheme; she deals in the primaries."

"I shall enjoy seeing what I can do for her," said Miss Spice, enthusiastically; then the conversation drifted to other topics.

In algebra Miss Spice found Betty attentive but puzzled. Her talk with Miss Greene had shown her the trouble and she soon settled on a remedy. Having won Betty's confidence she drilled her thoroughly, not only in class, but often during the study hour in her own room, reviewing the lessons with her from the beginning. Betty worked hard, devoting every spare moment to the detested study, with the result that she passed an examination with credit to both teacher and pupil.

The last week of the school year Betty and Lois spent together in the shadowy old

park where, arm in arm, they loitered through the shady paths, reading and dreaming and loving the great, beautiful, summer world. To the young girls this was an enchanted place, and ever, as they walked there, they carried with them the little red and gold morocco volume which expressed the things they loved most to talk about. The "Idyls of the King" spoke to them of castles and tournaments, of bold knights and glorious chivalry, while the very atmosphere seemed to hold the promise of something impending.

For hours they wandered in the quaint old garden, tucked away in a corner of the great park, where the weather-beaten sundial, in the midst of the boxwood and old-time flowers, greeted them with the gracious assurance which symphonized well with their own feelings,

"I chronicle only the sunny hours."

Tears ran down the cheeks of the girls as they read the parting words of the stricken Arthur to his few faithful retainers, —

"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep — the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were."

"I can't bear it; it 's so sad and sweet," said Lois, as the silent tears fell unheeded.

"This seems like Camelot," said Betty, dreamily, after a long silence. "It was a barren stretch of land; on the one side was the ocean and on the other a great water; and the moon was full."

So earnest were they that they missed the humor of comparing this beautiful park with that barren strip of sand.

It was in those balmy days, as the friends walked through the dim paths, that the dream came to Betty of founding a knightly order for good and gentle deeds. With shining eyes she spoke to Lois of the growing impulse.

"Oh, we must revive the spirit of chivalry, Lois. It is too beautiful to pass away forever. I, for one, believe in knighthood."

XIV

MISS JANE'S "SEED PICTER"

LOIS and Betty had grown more and more intimate as the months passed, and, to their delight, Mr. Byrd had acceded to Mrs. Baird's urgent invitation to have Lois spend part of her vacation at Weston. So their parting was not such a sad matter as it might otherwise have proved, and Betty reached home on a bright June evening, warm and dirty, but joyous in the anticipation of a long, happy summer.

"It 's so good to be at home, mother," she kept repeating. Her father was pleased with her glowing accounts of the school.

"It is indeed gratifying, Elizabeth, to hear from our cousin that you received the highest marks in your class," he remarked. "She seems to think you are a prodigy in Latin. I trust, though, that this commendation will not conduce to any unworthy pride."

"No, indeed," laughed Betty, "for she said it was not at all surprising when *you* were my teacher." Doctor Baird looked gratified and smiled complacently.

"How did you manage to come up so in algebra?" asked her mother.

"Oh, as I wrote to you, that horrid Miss Leet left. We simply made her go. The dearest little teacher came in her place. She is the kind that makes stupid girls learn in spite of themselves, and I suppose that accounts for my progress. But really, I was ashamed to go into her classes unprepared, I liked her so much."

"It seems like a miracle," said her mother, not without a motherly disdain of any hint of stupidity in her offspring.

On Betty's first evening home, Elder Huggentugler came in. He was the oldest officer in the church, a thin, stooped little man, with shrewd black eyes and a megaphone voice. He was very loyal to his pastor. A "stick-in-the-mud," he called himself, proud of his old-fashionedness. He seemed to have a lurking idea that his conservatism kept

this old world from flying off at a tangent. Warming to reminiscences he said to Betty, —

"I was an elder in this church before your daddy here was born, yes I was;" and he shook his head argumentatively.

"You have seen a great many changes, Elder," said Mrs. Baird.

"Changes, Mum! Aye, that I have. They were a dumb lot here, when I came over from Yeller Crick. I teached 'em everything. I was elder, sexton, Sabbath-School superintendent; and I read from the Holy Book when floods kep' the preacher away."

"Did n't they have a regular pastor in those days, Elder?" asked Betty.

"Bless you, no, child. We had to be satisfied with preachin' once a month, as the preacher had seven or eight churches to minister to. He had to ride from one to the other on horseback, and, when the water was high, he often could n't ford the streams. Then we had to go without any preachin'. Many 's the night I 've stayed up to daybreak, keepin' floatin' trees and logs from breakin'

down my cabin, leanin' out of an upstairs window and pushin' them away with a long pole."

"How exciting!" exclaimed Betty.

"Excitin'! My child, there is nothin' as steelthy and tetchy as a crick, except—" and his fist came down with an emphatic blow on the table "—except church music committees."

Doctor and Mrs. Baird exchanged amused glances, for they knew what to expect.

"Would you believe it, Betty," he continued, "—'t was long before you was born,—they brought an organ into the church right under my nose?" and again his knotted hand thumped the table. He looked around for sympathy, fully believing they all thought as he did, for he blamed only the music committee for introducing "that devil's music," as he called it.

"Well," he continued more calmly, "I got even with them. Before that cussed thing was brought into the sanctuary, I was always the first there for the meetin'. I seen after many things. Now I don't darken the door

until that screech owl stops;" and the old man chuckled.

Early the next morning the Elder rapped loudly at the back door with his cane, calling Betty. She came running out to meet him, her fair hair and pretty white dress flying in the breeze.

"Why, good morning, Elder," she cried delightedly; and the old man's heart warmed anew to her, for he had long been alone.

"Morning, Betty," he answered cheerfully. "I fetched a poke o' posies for your garden. Last night, on my way home, I was thinkin' you 'd be uneasy after bein' so busy gettin' book larnin', and thinks I, 'Flowers is companions to wimmen folks,' and you have a goodly space here for 'em," waving his hand over the garden. He had taken off his old soft hat, uncovering his thick white hair, neatly parted far down on the right side. He was very clean and sweet-looking in spite of his old coat. Though he had "money in the bank," as his poor neighbors said, he rarely bought new clothes. The child, in her freshness and beauty, and the gentle old man

formed a charming picture in Mrs. Baird's eyes, as she watched them go together into the old-fashioned garden and stand by the ancient well sweep. He was telling Betty his old, old grievance.

"They even wanted to take this away once. Yes, and all them little panes of glass in the windows there! They carc'l'ated to take 'em out and put in big blazin' things, all one piece. Why, they was impident lookin', good enough for them Robinsons down there —" and he flipped his thumb disdainfully in the direction of the benighted neighbors, "— dancin' and card playin' folks, but not for a preacher of the everlastin' gospel."

"I am glad you did n't let them do it, Elder. It would have been an awful shame to take away that old well sweep. And one of my teachers tells me those little panes of glass are all the fashion now for certain kinds of houses. We have them at our school."

"Ye don't say so!" ejaculated the old man. "Well, well, well! What 's the world comin' to! But I believe I did hear that

them old mehogany cheers and tables is all the style."

"Yes, indeed, Elder. People pay awfully high prices for chairs like my grandmother's."

"That I should live to see the day! Why, Betty, they wanted your mother to sell that mehogany sideboard and get a little, teeterin' yeller thing. S' I, 'Don't you do it, Mrs. Baird. It 's been good for more 'n a hunderd years, and it 's good enough now.' Yes, I did."

Betty not only enjoyed taking care of the flowers in the garden, but she extended her activities to the house, where she tried to follow out the ideas she had gathered from Miss Greene, whose chief recreation was the study of artistic home decoration.

The manse parlor, which the church committee, in a burst of artistic enthusiasm, had furnished the year before, especially demanded all her newly acquired knowledge. The fact that the room had four sunny windows had not affected the plans of that final court of appeals in matters of taste and appropriateness. Yellow was

fashionable that year, and the room was therefore furnished in as many varieties of that color as the committee could find space for; the walls were covered with paper having large gold figures on a white ground; the floor was protected by a carpet presenting a lemon ground, over which trailed a design of small red roses; the furniture was upholstered in brilliant orange brocade satin; the windows had buff shades. On a sunny day the effect was sulphurous; but the pride of the committee in the result of its work diminished not a jot or a tittle.

Betty asked her mother's permission to cover the glaring satin with pretty figured cretonne, a white ground with a design of tiny green leaves rioting over it, and to put up some soft curtains that greatly subdued the glare. They then went over the room carefully, selecting the pictures that would give the most restful feeling, and putting on the mantelpiece a squat green vase and a pair of silver candlesticks. After their labors were finished, they sat in the parlor congratulating themselves on its appearance, for the

first time since the church showered its golden blessings on it.

"There is n't an objectionable thing in the room now. Such a piece of luck that those wax flowers Mrs. Davis gave us happened to fall and break into smithereens!" exulted Betty.

"Yes, for I should have had to leave them in," answered her mother. "We can't afford to hurt people's kind feelings, no matter how much they hurt our artistic ones."

"They were too much for me, the garish, ghostly things! But do look there, mother. Miss Jane and the Elder are coming in with a package, an immense one. What do you suppose it is?" and Betty hurried to the door.

Miss Jane brushed flusteredly by her, bidding the Elder to bring the large square bundle into the house. With a bare nod, she unwrapped the package with eager fingers and displayed a remarkable object. From a background of common pasteboard stood out in strong black letters of some curious material, the words, "There is no place like Home;" above, below, to the

right, to the left, were various designs: gates ajar, wreaths, scrolls, broken hearts, crosses and crowns, each in a different color, and surrounding all a heavy wreath of dismal black. This wonderful creation, of a material as yet unknown to Betty and her mother, was enclosed in a heavy dead-black frame, broad and deep; the whole, perhaps a yard and a quarter square.

"There, sir!" exclaimed Miss Jane, triumphantly. "Even if you was to boardin' school a hull year, you never saw the beat of that!" and she beamed on Betty, snapping her long fingers at the mournful object.

"What is it, Miss Jane?" asked Mrs. Baird.

"There, I knowed it! It 's a seed picter. Everythin' there is seeds, apple seeds, orange seeds, lemon seeds, sunflower seeds, watermelon seeds, cowcumber seeds, all kinds of seeds is there;" and she looked at Betty for some sign of her characteristic enthusiasm.

"It 's wonderful!" sighed the latter, over whom was creeping the blighting fear that it was for her.

"Wonderful!" said Miss Jane, testily. "There ain't nothin' like it to The Pines, I carc'l'ate."

"No, there is n't," agreed Betty, in an almost inaudible voice. Miss Jane, mistaking the cause of her emotion, looked immensely pleased.

"It 's for you, 'Lizbeth," she announced.

"Oh, Miss Jane!" cried the girl, tears suffusing her eyes, tears that were the result of horror at the object and heart-ache at Miss Jane's goodness. Miss Jane was touched.

"I knowed you was just sot on purty things, so I tried to think of somethin' reel nice, not a dumb present like a — oh, you know—so I made this here picter. No one but me knows how, so there ain't another in the state. You 'd hev to go fur to find one."

"That's right, you certny would," agreed the Elder. Betty, laughing and crying, threw her arms around Miss Jane and laid her head on her shoulder.

"Oh, Miss Jane, how could you spend all that time for me?" Miss Jane had a momentary shamefacedness; then she bright-

ened as she looked around and saw that the furniture had been covered.

"You deserves it fer cov'rin' all them fine sating cheers. So savin' fer *you*, 'Liz'beth!"

"Oh, as to that — " began Betty, but her mother interrupted, drawing Miss Jane's attention to the picture.

"Why did you take all your precious time making it for that child? It 's the kindest thing I ever knew."

"Well, I thought she 'd miss all them purty things at The Pines, so I jest made that. Once a gal *knows*, she 's apt to grow dissatisfied." Miss Jane looked around for a suitable place for the seed picture, and decided that the gilt mirror should come down from above the white mantelpiece to make room for it. There it remained, to the constant pride and joy of Miss Jane and the Elder. Betty did not feel, as Miss Jane intimated, that virtue had received its own proper reward. Sadly she took the mirror out of the room and put it over the sitting-room mantel, determined to make that room the object of her artistic efforts in the future.

XV

THE ORDER OF THE CUP

AFTER a year at boarding school, Betty's first Sunday at home was an interesting experience, for her life had hitherto, in a measure, been centred in the church; so going to the pretty little brick edifice that morning was like a second home coming. Dressed in a simple piqué suit, bought in New York, and with a white chip hat crowning her fair head, her face bright and sweet with gay and tender interest, she was a picture which drew many eyes to the minister's pew, and made Miss Jane reproach herself for a sinful, wandering mind, because hers dwelt so easily and gladly on the girl, when her soul needed the father's admonitions.

To Betty the day was too full for thought; she loved everybody and everything; every familiar face and sound thrilled her with a new meaning.

"It is so good to be at home," they seemed to say, and all the summer this endearing insight lent a charm to every commonplace experience; but through it ran the new and vivifying emotions that her life and study at The Pines had given her. The Order that she and Lois had talked of during those long days in the garden was in the background of her thoughts. In her father's library she found an old volume on the "History of the Crusades," and it was seldom out of her hands. The beauty and romance of those olden days appealed strongly to the impressionable girl of fifteen, but mingled with them also was a keen appreciation of the glory to be found in Miss Jane's humble life of service.

She used to take her little brown leather book and go into her Rose Retreat, as she had named that part of their garden where the roses grew in wild profusion over a trellis and shaded a gray old rock and small rustic seat. A high arbor-vitæ hedge with a narrow opening ran around this corner and gave it still more seclusion. Here she would sit,

with her elbow on the rock, her face earnest with the spell of the old valiant days. Peter the Hermit, Robert, and Godfrey, became as real to her as Elder Huggentugler and Mr. Dinkum. The long summer days were full of the ardor of the times of the Crusades and the grace and nobility of knight-errantry. But the Order was no more than a pleasant reverie until that day late in June, when the past and present mingled in her thoughts, as she studied her Sunday-School lesson.

Betty was tired of her Sunday-School class, which, in the summer dearth of teachers, the superintendent had asked her to take, deeming her general intelligence and her position as the pastor's daughter, together with the aid her mother cheerfully promised, to be sufficient justification for his unusual course in asking such a young girl. She had labored faithfully to bring from the lessons some helpful instruction for the members of the class, girls near her own age; but a baffled feeling, a realization that the teaching of abstract truths was not her forte, was the invariable result.

This day she studied with especial earnestness and conscientiousness; she memorized the golden text, Mark ix. 41; "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." She read the verses again and again, but not a thought came to her. At last she threw down her lesson leaf with something like disgust.

"Oh, I can't see a thing in it for those youngsters. A cup of water! How in the world can they do that? I give it up. I am going to tell Mr. Marley that he'll have to get some one else."

Thoroughly disheartened, she took up her "History of the Crusades" and tried to read, but somehow there kept ringing in her ears, "a cup of water, a cup of water."

"Now what can that mean? A cup of water? Anybody can have a cup of water; it's such a common thing to talk about — oh, I wonder if He could have meant that we should do the little, everyday kindnesses in His name."

She leaned back in her seat, her eyes closed, her face radiant, her "History of the Crusades" clasped in her hands.

"Yes," she whispered, "the Order of The Cup, the Order of The Cup; to give a cup of water in His name; to do the little everyday kindnesses to our neighbors!"

She knew now how she would teach that lesson; it would be more than theory. The ten girls in her class would help her, if she only put it right. Miss Greene and Miss Spice were, she knew, interested in settlement work in New York, and Miss Spice taught there evenings. They were now raising money to send poor children to the country or seaside for a day or more. Why could n't she and her class help, giving a cup of water in this way? Her cheeks were afire with excitement as she thought of the beautiful possibility of doing something for them. Her home was only a few hours' ride from the city; perhaps some day she could have them there; but she would go step by step and see if she could not raise money somehow for those children's outing; eleven

children for one day at the seaside! "The Order of The Cup," she said to herself; "that 's better than Chivalry and Crusades." She would band her girls together and form an order, and ask Lois and Edith to join it, and every one who was willing to give a cup of water. Her ideas grew as she dwelt on the plan. Yes! they would give a festival in her Rose Retreat and sell ice-cream and cake and lemonade, and send the money to Miss Greene and Miss Spice.

On Sunday, in her enthusiastic way, she told the girls her plan for putting into practice the golden text. They were at once intensely interested; their generous young hearts responded eagerly as she depicted the duty and glory of serving others, and impressed on them that the Order would mean the doing of simple, little, everyday things, not the dreaming of doing something large and to them impossible. Out of a full heart she dwelt long and earnestly on the spirit in which the cup of water should be given; perhaps the cup would be only the cheerful doing of some disagreeable daily task, or the

remembering to say "Thank you" sincerely. In closing, she held up what should be the ideal of the Order in the words of Wordsworth, —

> "'That best portion of a good man's life, —
> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.'"

Mrs. Baird was delighted that Betty's unclaimed activity had taken such a direction. Seeing that the springs of the movement were pure and unselfish, she encouraged and watched over this budding altruism, knowing that one cannot too soon learn the lesson of service for others.

Edith came home from a visit to her grandmother and entered heartily into the spirit of the Order and the plans for raising money for the Settlement by means of a festival. Betty ordered a dozen badges of aluminum in the shape of a cup, with the words, "Order of The Cup" in a scroll beneath. As these were made in town their cost was small. She and the children wore them, much, it must be confessed, to the envy of the other children, who, however, were promised admittance to the Order as soon as it was fully

organized and a constitution framed. All over the village were posted notices of the festival, which the members of the Order made with rubber type, every one bearing a picture of the symbolic Cup and the motto they had taken for their own, "*Ut Possim*," "As I am able." The enthusiasm in the Order was great, and Lois came to Weston to visit Betty and help with the festival.

The lonely girl's pathetic joy at being in a house where the lovely home ways were preserved impressed on Mrs. Baird the fact that not only the poor but the rich needed the offices of the new and flourishing Order of The Cup; and her heart warmed to the pretty, gentle maiden. Lois at once became an ardent member of the Order, and had a hundred badges made at her own expense, to be sold to those who joined it, the money going to the fund for the city children.

It was not made too easy to become one of the Order. Admission was granted only after the applicant had given some evidences of her sincerity; then, with simple ceremonies, she took a vow to do "as she was

able." Membership was limited to girls under twenty, though later they had an Advisory Committee of older people, especially the clergymen of the town. Any reputable person could, by paying a small fee, become an honorary member. The sole aim of the Order was personal service; to do all one was able to do for others, especially in small things. By banding together they would be able to do this more effectually, for enthusiasm would be more readily kindled and all efforts reinforced by numbers.

The festival was well advertised and every detail was thought out in advance by the members. The local press was supplied by Betty with copious notices — not unwelcome to the country editor — and the object of the festival was graphically set forth. Contributions of cakes, ice-cream, lemons, candy, and other supplies came in abundance, and tablecloths were lent by interested mothers.

The momentous day came. From early morning Betty and Lois worked valiantly, helped by the other members, and when dusk fell they could not repress a happy

crow of satisfaction over the result. Everything was ready. The tables were attractively decorated with Japanese napkins in pretty patterns, with here and there large bowls of fresh cut roses and, in Weston eyes, the master touch, — dainty place-cards, painted with smart little ladies' heads, at each plate. The girls had learned to paint these at The Pines. Colored lanterns hung everywhere through the garden, and with the coming of darkness the great round moon looked down on a place of real enchantment, while from shadowy corners soft strains of music filled the air.

The members of the Order waited on the tables. They were all dressed in simple white, with rosebuds in their hair, their Cup badges worn conspicuously on their left shoulders, from which fell streamers of violet ribbon, the color of the Order. Mrs. Baird, with characteristic benevolence, devoted her time and energy to seeing that no one was overlooked. Elder Huggentugler was master of ceremonies and, determined that his pet's venture should be a success,

treated right and left; while Miss Jane was immeasurably puffed up by her elevation to the proud eminence of the cashier's desk, where each coin, as it was paid in, carried to her its message that "'Lizbeth was certny whoopin' things up t'-night."

The Elder's eyes proudly followed Betty's every motion, and once, when she had a spare moment to hang on his arm and confide to him her dreams of the Order, he felt as proud as though the President of the United States had entrusted him with a great state secret.

After all was over it was pronounced the most beautiful festival ever given in Weston, an "evening long to be remembered," in the words of *The Weston Gazette.* The Order cleared eighty-five dollars, and this with the fifteen dollars realized from the sale of badges made one hundred dollars, which they sent at once to Miss Spice in a violet envelope, with the compliments of The Order of The Cup and the hope that it would enable a large number of poor city children to enjoy the balmy breezes and

other delights of the seaside for one day at least.

The Order waxed large and prosperous until, with a chapter in each church in the town, its membership included nearly all the young girls in Weston. Naturally, such a movement attracted the attention of the pastors of the village, and at the next meeting of the Ministerial Association it provoked a good deal of informal discussion.

"I feel, Doctor Baird," said Mr. Black of the Baptist church, "that your daughter's enthusiasm and indomitable energy, combined with her firm hold on the affections of her young friends, have made it a movement of power, and that it has elements of permanency, even though it is carried on by the young."

"They are growing older every year, and the church needs the young," responded Doctor Baird, pleased with this appreciation of his daughter's ability.

"But," said Mr. Wells of the Methodist church, "is n't there something fantastic about it, its name, for instance?"

"Why, I consider that an inspiration," rejoined Mr. Black. "We cannot expect young girls to go about prosaically organizing a Home Missionary Society as we old fogies do. By all means let them have the poetic and picturesque."

"True," said the conservative Mr. Wells, as he thoughtfully adjusted his eye-glasses. "My daughter is heart and soul in this Order, and her mother says the child has been quite changed through its means. I fear, though," and he sighed, "that I have grown hide-bound and cannot easily adjust myself to new-fangled things." His smile was singularly pleasant and quite belied his words.

"For my part," said Mr. Black, his young and sensitive face glowing, "I rejoice in this awakening among the young to a sense of their privileges and obligations to those who are less fortunate. Of course the fundamental idea of the organization is to help with little things, bright smiles, ready sympathy, answered letters, reading to the sick, seeing the good side of people, withholding from gossip, and a thousand and one little courte-

sies in the home and in society, — in a word, Christian courtesy."

"My, oh, my!" laughed Mr. Golden of the Presbyterian church. "Mr. Black is quite an enthusiast over it."

"Because I have seen some of its results," responded Mr. Black, warmly. "Our Committee on Flowers, for instance, has been made up of young girls, and in spite of everything they would at times fail us. They made one petty excuse after another. Last week was the turn of one of the most careless members, and the chairman told me that she not only went to some trouble to procure fine flowers but took an interest in arranging them, and all so cheerfully. Of course Mrs. Wicks could not refrain from asking her what had changed her so. You know Mrs. Wicks's way. She said, 'What do you think that fly-up-the-creek answered me? "I understand my duty better now, Mrs. Wicks. I am a member of the Order of The Cup and I want to do all I am able to do."' 'Order of the fiddlesticks' was Mrs. Wicks's amiable reply, but the girl only laughed and

replied, 'Order of The Cup, if you please Mrs. Wicks.'"

"'By their fruits ye shall know them,'" said another minister. "Our church believes in interesting the young, and I shall encourage this."

XVI

THE RETURN OF THE SHIPWRECKED MARINER

FLOODS delayed the return of the roommates for several days, and they found the school in full swing. The new girls were eager to see Betty. It often happens that, in a school full, one girl becomes the object of the romantic interest of the others, and Betty chanced to hold this unique position in the little world at The Pines. Her treatment when she first came there, her subsequent triumphs, her success in her classes and in the play, and above all, her fertile leadership in picturesque adventure, were told and retold many times to the new girls and cast over her a captivating glamour of romance.

The badges of the Order worn by Betty and Lois were noticed at once.

"What are you wearing those tin cups for?" asked the matter-of-fact Caroline, as

she examined them with her cool scrutiny. Betty was aghast, and glanced in disgust at the stupid girl, while Lois, who did not take things to heart as deeply as Betty, laughed.

"Tin cup! Can't you read what is on the scroll?" demanded Betty, though she pulled away the badge so quickly that Caroline could not possibly read it. "But it 's casting pearls before —" she continued haughtily, as she walked off in a temper. "Tin cup, indeed!" Her cheeks flushed with offended pride. "A prosaic tin cup!" and she walked on more rapidly until she found herself almost running. A great chagrin filled her. All her symbols were read into mean characters by those around her; they were so sordid. Tears of vexation came into her angry eyes. As she went flying along, she heard some one say, with mirthful timidity, "Atalanta." She lifted her angry eyes, and there, standing directly in her path, hat in hand, was the Bishop's grandson, Paul. A bright, pleased smile held the place of the half scornful, half patronizing look she had often surprised on his face. Her wrath fell several degrees,

and she reached out her hand impulsively to his, while a new friendliness leaped into her tones.

"I am in a perfectly furious temper," she announced, her smiling face at the minute belying her words.

"May I ask what it is all about?" he inquired, and there was a boyish diffidence in his manner which she had never seen in the young student. She hesitated. The Order had grown dear to her, and she felt she could not bear any more, after the "tin cup" episode. What if he too should scoff at their Order? She touched the badge, saying,—

"It is about this. Does it look like a — a — tin cup to you?"

"Certainly not. The proportions are altogether different."

She brightened visibly, though she looked a trifle ashamed.

"Well, some one called it a — a tin cup, and I got — mad." The childish word came out with all the old force, and Paul laughed.

"'As I am able,'" he translated significantly.

"I was not able to control my temper," she answered, smiling.

"But what does the cup mean?" he insisted, as he examined the badge which she had handed to him. In her rapid fashion she told the history of the Order, while the young student held the badge with gentle fingers, his face crossed by varying expressions. No untimely jest came to spoil her enthusiasm, no frown aroused her antagonism. Miss Greene saw them from her window and watched them curiously, wondering at their serious faces.

After a short silence Paul said, "It is all so beautiful that I am bereft of words to express how I feel about it. I want to be an honorary member some day."

"I am so glad you understand," said Betty, gratefully.

"I do," he answered, "and even associating it with a 'tin cup' does not spoil the idea for me. It enhances it. I should not care for one of gold or silver. The poor everyday,

vessel becomes symbolic of commonplace words or acts, which are made beautiful by the spirit back of them."

"Oh, how you have helped me!" cried Betty. "It makes the Order clearer to me too. Some of the members wanted silver ones, but I had a feeling that something cheap and simple was more in keeping. Oh!" she exclaimed suddenly, "I forgot all about it, but we are not allowed to talk with anybody on the campus who is n't connected with the school."

"Forgive me," said Paul, "for I spoke to you first."

"How could you know the rules?" answered Betty, and then, in a relieved voice, "There is Miss Greene beckoning to me. Please remember me to your grandfather," she added, with a sudden prodding of her "manners."

She hurried ahead of Paul, who was about to call on Miss Payne on an errand for his grandfather, and ran swiftly to Miss Greene's room and knocked softly. After opening the door in response to the invitation to

come in, she hesitated on the threshold, for her conscience about little things had become more sensitive since she had established the Order.

"Come in! Don't pretend you are afraid," said Miss Greene, genially; and Betty shut the door with something of a bang, flew over to her and kissed her on both cheeks.

"No cajoling," warned Miss Greene, in a caressing voice, as Betty sat down on a footstool by her side, her favorite seat, and held her soft hands in her own slim brown ones.

"How sunburned you are!" exclaimed Miss Greene. "You are your own 'nut-brown maid.' It is not unbecoming, either. But confess, now, about your conversation out there on the campus. I saw the lad stop you."

"Indeed, indeed, Miss Greene, I forgot all about the rules until just before I saw you."

"Before?" queried Miss Greene, teasingly.

"Yes, before; really," said Betty.

"Oh, of course I believe you, little rogue, though I have known you to break rules before without any apparent compunction."

"Yes, but I let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, feed on my damask cheek; I pined in thought. That may be the reason my conscience is so tender now."

"The worm has not eaten away your quotations," said Miss Greene, dryly, pinching her brown cheeks. "Frankly, I thought you would come up here and justify yourself with a thousand ingenious arguments, but here you are confessing at once."

"My rugged virtue makes you gasp, I see," said Betty, teasingly; but by the time she had finished, Miss Greene had her hand over the pretty soft lips.

"Seriously, Elizabeth, why were you young folks so solemn? If you had seemed happier I should have called you sooner, but I was restrained by the sight of your serious faces."

Betty was silent, and a faint color came to her cheeks as she played with Miss Greene's ring.

"What means this new and painful reticence?" demanded Miss Greene, gayly.

"It is about our Order," explained Betty, hesitatingly; for she felt she could not bear

to have her teacher fail to understand what had become vital to her.

"Oh, you mean the little society you had this summer, which raised all that money for our Settlement? That was a capital idea of yours, Elizabeth," she said heartily.

"Yes, it was that but not all. We have organized permanently and taken the name The Order of The Cup, from those verses in the Bible about giving a cup of cold water in His name."

"Oh," said Miss Greene. She said no more, but she looked for a quiet moment out of the window.

"And here is our badge!" continued Betty, as she handed it to the teacher.

"*Ut Possim*," read the latter; and she looked at the small symbol with the Bible reference, Mark ix. 41. Betty then told the whole history of the organization, while Miss Greene listened attentively without one interruption, watching the eager expression, the earnest eyes and voice, and seeing a change in the face not wholly due to sun-brown.

"A new meaning has come into her life and I must be careful not to disturb it," she thought; and she leaned over and kissed the young girl's broad brow, putting back the soft hair from each side of the face, and holding it between her hands.

"And so," she said gayly but sweetly, "this is what you have been doing while away from your old teacher. At any rate I can be an honorary member."

Betty clapped her hands with delight as she exclaimed, —

"Oh, will you join?"

"If I am able," quoted Miss Greene. "That is, if I can afford the dues."

"I'll bring you a badge at once," said Betty; and she repeated Paul's words about the tin cup.

Through one of the chamber-maids, the roommates heard of an old lady, living in the village near the school, who was friendless and nearly blind. On further inquiries they learned that Mrs. Humphrey, for such was her name, had sufficient means to live in

some degree of comfort, but suffered greatly because her blindness deprived her of her life-long pleasure, reading. Betty at once proposed that they go and read to her. They consulted Miss Greene about it, and she readily consented to go with them to see if things were as represented, and, if so, she would secure permission from their parents for them to read to her once a week. Therefore, the following Saturday afternoon the three went to Mrs. Humphrey's little house, which they found standing in the midst of a weedy plot of grass, surrounded by a tumble-down fence, everything on the outside bearing evidence of long neglect. But there was a promise of better things inside, in the sunny Swiss curtains at the windows and the cheerful pots of well-kept geraniums on the window-sills.

In answer to their knock a tall, commanding-looking woman, about sixty years of age, came to the door. She was still handsome, despite the evidences of suffering on her worn countenance, her hair was snowy white, plainly arranged, her dark eyes soft and gentle

and lovely. The house was rather bare, but absolutely neat and homelike, a table and several chairs of fine design speaking of better days. Some pieces of old china at once captivated Miss Greene's antiquarian fancy, and led to an easy and natural conversation. It was not difficult for the teacher then, in her frank, kind way, to tell the reason for their call; but Mrs. Humphrey, while evidently pleased, showed her appreciation with some reserve. She and Miss Greene found much in common, however, so that before the call came to an end she gladly consented to having the two young girls read to her the next Saturday.

Before that day, Miss Greene saw the old lady's pastor and learned all he knew about her history. Mrs. Humphrey and her husband had come into his parish two years before, with a letter from a church in the far South. They mingled little with others, and were apparently suffering from a deep sorrow, the cause of which was unknown, though the pastor said he had reason to believe it was due to the death of a son. After the husband's

death, about a year since, Mrs. Humphrey had failed physically, and her eyesight had gone almost entirely. She politely but firmly refused to discuss her affairs, and her reserve had alienated the few people she had met.

The next Saturday Betty and Lois, taking a new book of cheerful tone, went to Mrs. Humphrey's cottage. She was charmed with the fresh young voices and laughed heartily at the bright passages in the story. While they waited a little for Betty's voice to rest, Mrs. Humphrey told them several amusing stories, and in return Betty described an old churchyard at home where there were many curious epitaphs. One especially delighted her. The large lot had four flat stones in memory of a man and his three wives. On the first stone was inscribed, "Sacred to conjugal affection and to the memory of Joanna, wife of Hezekiah Hornswogler." The second contained,

"Insatiate archer,
Would not one suffice?"

On the third was

"Thy shaft flew thrice,
And thrice my peace was slain."

Mrs. Humphrey smilingly contributed another anecdote, and so, laughing together, they became good friends.

"I thank you much for coming," said Mrs. Humphrey, as they were leaving. "This is the pleasantest afternoon I have had for a long time. I shall expect you next Saturday afternoon."

"Oh, we have enjoyed it so much," responded the girls, "and you may be sure we 'll be here bright and early next week."

True to their promise, they were there bright and early the next Saturday and the following ones, bringing much cheer to the lonely, bereaved woman; and in return hearing the most fascinating tales of Southern life before and during the great civil war. Not a small item of the attractiveness of the little cottage to the girls was the snowy Southern biscuit and Mrs. Humphrey's own orange marmalade, which she regularly provided for them. It perhaps never occurred to the girls that probably they would n't have stuck so nobly to their altruistic undertaking had it not been for

these toothsome dainties and the exciting war-time tales.

Several weeks after their first visit they were having their usual good time, reading and eating and telling stories, when Mrs. Humphrey took a letter from a little shelf over the window and handed it to Betty.

"I am sorry to trouble you, dear, but may I ask you to read this letter for me? I have had it for some time, but my eyes have been so bad lately that I can't make it out."

"I am not very good at deciphering strange handwriting, but I 'll do my best," said Betty, as she took the blurred and almost illegible letter, postmarked Bombay, India.

"'Dear Madam,'" she began, reading very slowly, "'I—take—pleasure—in—in—in—' what 's that word? '—in—informing—you that—' I can't make out that name. It 's some one's name, Mrs. Humphrey. Have you any relative or friend in Bombay?"

"Oh, no, my child. I am alone, utterly alone. But I wonder what it could be; from Bombay, you say?" she asked in some excitement.

"Yes, from Bombay, Mrs. Humphrey. And this is some one's name — I can't make it out."

"I don't know whose it could be. My only son was lost at sea and my husband died a year ago, and they were all I had in the world."

"What was your son's name?" asked Betty, sympathetically.

"Mortimer, dear."

"Oh, what a pretty name," exclaimed Betty, then resumed her attempt to decipher the letter. One look, and she gave a start and turned pale.

"Will you excuse me, Mrs. Humphrey, if I take this outside so I can see it better?" asked Betty, much agitated as she motioned Lois to follow her. Mrs. Humphrey was rocking in her chair, forgetful of them for the moment, as she mourned over her lost ones. Once outside Betty grasped Lois's arm until she winced, as she said, —

"Oh, Lois, it's Mortimer, I'm sure it's Mortimer; and it says he's coming home this month! What shall we do? Oh, I

wish Miss Greene was here! I'm afraid to tell Mrs. Humphrey."

"Here comes Miss Greene now," said Lois, in an intense whisper; and they both sped down the path to meet her. Excitedly Betty told her the story, and thrust the letter into her hand, saying, —

"It does say Mortimer is coming; does n't it, Miss Greene? Oh, do say he is coming. Mrs. Humphrey thinks he was lost in a shipwreck. If it is Mortimer, it must be Mrs. Humphrey's son and — "

"Certainly that word is Mortimer," answered Miss Greene.

"Oh, then Mrs. Humphrey's son, who was shipwrecked and died at sea, is coming home this month!" she exclaimed, as she whisked Lois up the path.

Miss Greene, though puzzled, saw from Betty's excited manner and incoherent words that something of importance had happened.

"Sit down here on the step, Betty, and try to calm yourself while I read this over again so there will be no doubt as to its meaning."

Miss Greene read and re-read the letter carefully before she said, —

"It certainly says that her son Mortimer is coming home this month. This will be glorious news to her, but I must break it to her gently."

As they entered the room Miss Greene greeted her cheerfully, recalling her from her sad memories and bringing her mind back to the letter which, for the time, she had forgotten.

"How do you do, Miss Greene?" she said. "I am glad to see you. I was just telling these dear children about my boy Mortimer."

"Did I understand that he was lost at sea, Mrs. Humphrey?" asked Miss Greene.

"He was wrecked in the Indian Ocean two years ago, and the boat that he and several others got away in was never heard of again, though two others reached land safely."

"Are you sure that his boat was never heard of again?" urged Miss Greene.

"Oh, Miss Greene, I have had no news of any kind. I read the papers every day until

three months ago when my eyes failed, and nothing has ever been heard of them, not a thing."

"But you know, Mrs. Humphrey, that sailors are often saved after the most undreamed-of experiences and long after their relatives have given them up for dead."

"I know, I know," said Mrs. Humphrey, despondently. "But if Mortimer had been saved I should have known it before this time. He surely would have sent me word somehow."

"But, Mrs. Humphrey, I know of a case very much like yours, where a sailor was wrecked and all on board were reported lost. After drifting around for several weeks, they were picked up by a whaling vessel that did not return from its cruise for over a year. Then this boy of whom I am speaking was taken sick in a foreign land, and could not send any word to his mother for long months after she believed him dead."

She stopped, for Mrs. Humphrey looked at her with a startled expression. The letter said something about some one coming to

see her! Her breath came in gasps and she could only say, "Go on, go on!"

"After this boy had been sick a long time," continued Miss Greene, "a friend of his wrote to his mother that he was coming home, and that he would see her soon, on — on the — " and Miss Greene hesitated, not knowing how much she dared say, for Mrs. Humphrey was gazing at her in anguished expectation.

"In October?" she asked in a faint whisper.

Miss Greene nodded affirmatively as she pointed to the letter.

"Oh, it can't be! My boy, my boy!" cried Mrs. Humphrey, as she dropped on her knees and buried her face in Miss Greene's lap, sobbing out her heart.

Betty and Lois, who had been held fascinated by the romance of the scene, now stole out of the house and, hand in hand, hurried to their room, and closed the door without uttering a word.

The next week when the girls went to Mrs. Humphrey's cottage they found her radiantly happy. With her was a tall, noble-

looking, sunburned young man, whom she introduced as her son Mortimer. The girls, fearful of intruding, would have hurried away, but the son, when he learned that they were the two who had been instrumental in informing his mother of his homecoming, insisted that they should remain to hear the story of his shipwreck and rescue, which they were delighted to do.

Three years before, he had sailed as first mate in a ship bound for India and China, with an assorted cargo of "Yankee notions." When they had disposed of them they started on the return trip with a full load of Oriental goods, and were progressing finely when they were caught in one of those terrific typhoons characteristic of the Indian Ocean. Passing as suddenly as it came, it left them a complete wreck, with all the masts over the side and the seams in the hull opened so wide that the ship was sinking rapidly. Hastily provisioning their small boats, they embarked in them and sailed for the nearest port, Colombo, in Ceylon, which they hoped to make in about a week's sailing. The third day after

the wreck the boats were separated by a squall, and soon after that the one commanded by Mr. Humphrey was picked up by a whaling ship bound for the Antarctic whaling grounds. The captain of the whaler, kind-hearted man though he was, could not afford to return to port to land the shipwrecked seamen, and the only thing for them to do was to go along with him. The whaling voyage lasted over a year, and on the return trip Mr. Humphrey was taken sick and was landed in Bombay, where he was sent to the hospital. There he lay for nearly three months, too weak to talk; but as soon as he gained sufficient strength he asked the hospital surgeon, an American, to write to his mother the letter which the girls had read. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, he secured a mate's berth in a homeward-bound vessel, and the long voyage completely restored him to his normal condition of robust health.

At the conclusion of his narrative, in which he included many interesting details, Mr. Humphrey brought out his carved sea

chest and showed the girls some of the quaint and curious things he had gathered together in his life at sea, during which he had visited practically all the important ports in every country on the globe. The chest was packed to overflowing with things sent to his mother from time to time, which she had carefully preserved for him, though he greatly mourned certain prized treasures lost when the ship went down.

The girls' eyes glowed at the sight, and Mr. Humphrey laughed as he said to his mother, —

"Just look at their eyes, mother. You could hang hats on them," which caused the girls to join heartily in the laughter.

They were fairly breathless as they handled the marvellous products of Oriental patience and disregard of time. They were especially interested in the ancient bronze and carved ivory idols, the Japanese sword guards of measureless antiquity, the silver bracelets and anklets of delicate and intricate workmanship, the priceless India shawls and scarfs, the beautiful ivory inlaid teak-

wood boxes, the slippers of grotesque shapes with wonderful decorative designs, the ivory fans covered with tiny carved figures, the choice collection of small-arms of all countries, and numberless other things, of which the girls had never even heard.

After they had seen and handled them to their hearts' content, the two young girls were astonished beyond measure when Mr. Humphrey, thanking them for the joy they had brought to his mother, insisted that each should take as a memento of the occasion, one of the wonderful teakwood boxes, inlaid with carved ivory and bound with dainty hammered metal strips, among his most prized possessions. He sent to Miss Greene a wonderful centuries-old idol of carved ivory, which his mother knew would appeal to her antiquarian tastes.

Clasping their treasures to their breasts and treading on air, the roommates walked to the school in a thrilling atmosphere of romance; and it was many weeks before they lost the feeling that they were characters in an old romantic tale.

XVII

THE MASQUERADE

THERE was great excitement at The Pines when it was announced that they were again to have a masquerade. It had been omitted the year before, much to the disappointment of the pupils, for it was always the most popular entertainment given. The date set for it this year was Washington's Birthday. It was strictly private, only the pupils attending. Betty was charmed with the idea and she and her roommate had many long conversations over the selection of their costumes. As far as possible the girls kept their disguises from each other, so that there was always great excitement when the time came for unmasking. Our roommates, however, did not attempt secrecy towards each other.

"Why, half the fun is in talking it over to each other and changing our minds every

half-hour," said Betty. "I'm going to be some character that demands a black wig," she went on, "for I 've always wanted black, jet black, hair, and now is my chance."

"Well," said Lois, "what character will you take?"

"Oh, if I can't do any better I shall make my character suit my wig. For one night I am going to be just the kind of looking girl I have always wanted to be. I am going to be tall, so I shall have high heels and wear my wig piled up on top of my head. My wig will be without one crimp. I love red cheeks, so I 'll paint mine red like Jess's. I shall wear red, all the red I can. I have been tied to blue until I am sick of it."

"Are you going to be a Japanese lady or Queen Isabella?" asked Lois, slyly.

"Oh, I have changed my mind again. I am going to be Volumnia, the noble Roman mother of Coriolanus. I 'll have a red toga —did the women wear togas?—and bands through my glorious black hair. I 'll learn her speeches and quote them to every one I meet."

"How many will know them?" asked Lois, whose common sense never deserted her.

"I shall," answered Betty, grandly. "I am going to enjoy MYSELF. Of course," she continued, as if it were an afterthought, "I shall look at the other make-ups; but for this one evening I am not going to be Elizabeth. I am to be Volumnia of Rome. I am going to make believe, just as I did when I was six years old. I'll be the Roman matron, but—" and she looked pensive—"I wish I could be proud of my son—I have to prod him so!"

"I should think you would enjoy that part of it, Betty," laughed Lois.

"'Of all the griefs that harass the distrest,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest,'"

quoted Betty, in mock sorrow.

"Do you know that two of the girls are going to wear their brothers' military suits?" said Lois.

"How do you know? I thought everything about the masquerade was to be such a secret."

"A secret at The Pines! Impossible!" Lois exclaimed.

"Oh, I have it now, Lois. Let us be Viola and Sebastian. We can soon have suits made up like those we saw in Twelfth Night in New York. I must be Viola just so I can say, 'She never told her love,' etc."

"I reckon you've forgotten that I suggested that right in the beginning. I do hope you'll stick to it long enough to get the suits made."

The evening for the masquerade came, and with it more Martha Washingtons, Mary Queen of Scots, and Charlotte Cordays, than this humdrum world could conveniently hold. The girls' Viola and Sebastian costumes consisted of knee-breeches of brown cloth, brown stockings, buckled slippers, and brown capes reaching almost to the ground, while a jaunty brown cap with a feather in it completed each fetching get-up. As they wore wigs and were not unlike in size and weight they really seemed like twins.

Jessie Bentworth naturally selected a mirth-provoking costume. With three other fun-

loving spirits she formed a quartette,—making a pun by the way,—and they named themselves "The Sally Fourths." Their make-up was extremely absurd and caused great amusement. They wore comic masks, both on their faces and on the backs of their heads, scoop bonnets open at both ends, rope hair falling down both sides of their shoulders, and gloves with two thumbs. As their long and remarkable skirts concealed their feet it was simply impossible to tell which way they were really facing. They were constantly followed by a troop of masqueraders who in vain tried to discover the true faces. "Poor Janus is a back number after this," said one puzzled follower.

A very modern looking cadet (Helen) paired off with Queen Elizabeth (Dorothy) who was in all the glory of a monstrous ruff for which she showed great solicitude; she was constantly, in shrewish tones, warning her companion to "take care of my ruff." A Quaker (Edna Norris) and a clown (Pauline Hays) apparently found some peculiar ground in common, for they were insepar-

able, the motley and the gray mingling in the dances; while Mephistopheles and Little Bo Peep sat cozily side by side on the stairs, Belle Hunter being Mephistopheles and Caroline, Bo Peep.

The characters that caused most remark were Beauty and the Beast. As Jess said, it would take "a colossal nerve" for any one to take the part of Beauty, but when unmasking time came, she said she was not surprised to see Miriam's face appear from behind the mask. The Beast's costume was ingenious, including a donkey's head of which the ears, eyes, and jaw moved and carried out the character of the animal in a startling manner.

To Betty, the crowning feature of the evening came when Miss Greene as Martha Washington, and Miss Payne as Queen Elizabeth, accosted her without knowing who she was. She had purposely remained seated in a melancholy attitude, waiting for an opportunity to deliver her beloved speech.

"Prithee, young page, why of so melancholy countenance?" asked the stately

queen, tapping "him" on the shoulder with her fan, while the sedate Martha Washington stood by, in republican simplicity. With a despairing gesture and head bowed mournfully, the page repeated

> "'She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sat like patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief. Was not this love, indeed?
> We men may say more, swear more: but indeed
> Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
> Much in our vows, but little in our love.'"

So sadly impressive was the attitude and so thrilling the tone, that every eye in the room turned to the slight young figure, while the noble, sweet voice rang out. At the last words the two pages vanished through a nearby door, followed by loud clappings and cries of "Bravo;" but the pages remained invisible until the excitement had passed, when they came quietly in.

The military suits, of which Lois had spoken, were very successful and lent dignity to the evening. After the Shakespeare

recital one of the wearers dogged Betty and Lois until they turned in great scorn.

"Hast no sword, good fellow?" gibed Viola, shaking her toy sword. The two pages laughed scornfully and walked away, but the young soldier followed.

"Avaunt, or I'll run you through," threatened Sebastian; but the soldier pursued them courageously.

"Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time," said Viola to Sebastian in a stage whisper; and she continued, tauntingly, "Why are we so pestered with a popinjay?"

"Oh, monstrous!" replied Sebastian, looking back fiercely at their silent shadow. When the pages sat, the silent soldier sat; when they walked, he walked; but never a word uttered he.

"Who in the world is it?" Betty asked in an undertone. "I didn't think there was a girl in the school who could hold her tongue this long."

"I'm almost afraid," said Lois.

"Nonsense," said Betty, "I'm proud of her, and I shall watch when the masks are taken

off. There are four soldiers, so we must keep our eyes on them. By the way, Lois, I thought you told me only two of the girls were going to wear cadet suits. I wonder who else decided to wear them." Then, insolently over her shoulder to the silent figure, —

"Art thou there, truepenny?"

"How do you remember all those quotations?" sighed Lois, enviously. "I can't think of one."

"Why, I have been quoting all my life, and many's the time I have been scolded for it; but this proves that no learning is lost," she answered in a mock-wise tone.

"Oh, I have thought of one," rejoiced Lois, then turning sternly on the cadet, said, —

"Assume a virtue if you have it not, and come here and try to talk."

The soldier came, and sat just in front of them; but he said not a word. As he moved towards them Viola said, —

"By the pricking of my thumbs, something evil this way comes;" and she pointed her

sword at the grim soldier. "Excellent dumb discourse," she added, as they walked off, stumbling over their swords in their haste. "For my voice, I have lost it," she continued disdainfully.

"I was never so bethumped with words," hissed at last the silent one; and he disappeared in the crowd.

At the sound of his voice, Betty started. It was familiar, yet she could not at the instant recollect whose it was; but it gave her an impression of not belonging to one of the schoolgirls.

"Did you recognize her voice?" she asked Lois.

"I have been wondering," the latter answered. "It sounds familiar, yet I can't think which of the girls it is."

"Well," said Betty, "We 'll watch those cadets when they unmask. It was a good imitation of a boy's voice; but we certainly can pick her out from the four."

When the hour for unmasking arrived Betty leaned over excitedly to Lois and whispered, —

"Lois! There are only *two* cadets here, and I know neither of them was the one who spoke to us. Who could the other two have been? And why aren't they here now?"

The two girls looked into each other's puzzled eyes, as Lois repeated,—

"Who could they have been?"

XVIII

THE CLASS ELECTION

THROUGHOUT her second year Betty devoted herself assiduously to her studies. She was beginning to see school life with maturer eyes, to realize something of its value as a preparation for the future; while the Order of The Cup had revealed to her some of the deeper lessons of her relations to her fellow beings. She made special efforts to be of service to the new girls, to make them feel at home, and to help them in their studies, especially in Latin, where her father's thorough training stood her in good stead.

Almost all of the girls in the school joined the Order, of which Betty had been elected President. It had the warm approval of Miss Payne and Miss Greene, who felt that such a society was the best kind the girls could have; young people as well as old, it

seemed, needed an organization to which to be loyal.

Betty kept up an active correspondence with the Weston chapter of the Order, the members of which had much girlish pleasure in the fact that so many pupils at The Pines were affiliated with them in the work. Her constant endeavor to live up to the ideal of the Order made Betty thoughtful and gentle; she was growing, intellectually and spiritually, far more than she knew. That she had grown physically was brought forcibly to her attention on the evening, late in the spring, when her class elected officers for the senior year. She dressed alone, and hurriedly put on the lilac silk, of which the sleeves, just a year ago, had been changed from Weston into Paris terms of style. She had not worn it for six months or more. As there was no pier glass in the room she did not notice the length of the skirt. Indeed, she rarely thought of her clothes, except in the matter of neatness — though in the first year in school she had had occasion to think a good deal whether or not they were near

enough to current styles to escape ridicule. Her hair, now almost golden as it outgrew its childish fairness, was less unruly and, though it fell in soft thick masses over her head, with only fluffy tendrils straying over her forehead, it was neatly turned up, with a black bow as its ornament.

This evening, as Betty quickly traversed the brightly lighted corridors, she met Miriam, who gave her one long look, then ran away laughing mockingly.

"What is she laughing about?" Betty asked herself. She stood under the electric light pondering, before entering the recitation-room where the election was to be held, when Miriam returned with two of her followers, and silently and insolently stared up and down at Betty's dress; then they broke forth into peals of harsh laughter.

"What is the matter with you girls?" demanded Betty; but no one replied, and the laughter brought other girls to the scene, Jessie and Dorothy among them.

"What is that goose laughing about, anyway?" she asked Jess and Dorothy.

for her temper was aroused by Miriam's manner.

"I can't see anything to laugh about," answered Jess. "What is it all about?" she demanded curtly of Miriam, with whom she had lost all patience; but Miriam and her friends only continued their sneering laughter.

"Can't you see that her dress is too funny?" at last said Miriam, derisively.

"It is four inches too short," commented another.

"Perfectly killing!" added Miriam.

"She looks like little Violet Dare, and she shows her black stockings. They're cotton, too, I do believe," said the third girl.

Jess looked down at the dress. "You're a perfect dunce, Miriam!" she said. Betty too looked down at it.

"For pity's sake!" she exclaimed, delightedly. "Why, I am growing like a bad weed. I haven't had this on for six months, so you see what a giant I'll soon be."

"You're a regular beanstalk," said Dorothy, as Betty turned to Miriam to say, —

"Thank you with all my heart for calling my attention to my dress. It would have been more like you to allow me to go into the room just as I am. This is not the first time you have tried to make me a laughing-stock and failed. You did not think far enough this evening."

"Well, she's sorry enough now that she didn't wait. She didn't think of it until you spoke. I saw that in her face," said Dorothy.

Betty looked down at her short skirt ruefully. "It will take more ruffles and bands than Miss Jane has at her command to elongate this dress sufficiently."

The election this year was marked by unusual electioneering and wire-pulling by Miriam in her efforts to defeat Betty, who was regarded by nearly all of the members of the class as the only logical candidate for the presidency. Miriam, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, was determined to defeat her, and for this purpose nominated Helen Dyke, who consented only after Miriam had

used her most persuasive powers to convince her that it was not a good thing to have only one candidate.

The coming election was much discussed in the corridors, and feeling ran high.

"Why, Betty is the only one to be considered," said Lois, "for what other girl has her power of organization, of ready invention, and of gracious presiding?"

"Her voice alone would outweigh all other considerations," said Caroline, who had grown to admire Betty to such an extent that she copied her language, as far as her gifts would allow.

"Yes, and there are her graceful, odd little ways, like no one else's in the world. Mary Livingstone used to say they were 'distinguished,'" said Jess.

"Don't you think she is stuck up since she visited the Livingstones and the Kings at Easter? They made such a fuss over her," asked one of the newer girls, who had come under Miriam's influence.

Lois and Jess laughed.

"It would n't be hard to tell where you

heard that," said Jess. "Miriam is saying that to all the new girls."

"Yes, it was Miriam," answered the new girl.

"Ugh! I knew it," said Jess, in a disgusted tone, looking at the others.

"Why, Betty never thinks whether people are rich or not," said Lois, spiritedly. "When she returned, she talked about it just as she does about everything else. It was a new experience for her, and she felt their kind hospitality. Mary wrote to me that every one went wild over her, and one old lady insisted on taking her to Europe."

"Was n't it fortunate, girls, that Miriam laughed at Betty's short dress in the corridor?" said Jess. "It made me mad at first, but now I am glad of it. You know girls are mighty funny about such things, and if she had appeared before the class that way and some one had started a laugh, it might have lost her the election."

"Here she comes now!" exclaimed Caroline. "Does n't she look too sweet for anything in white! I can't see how any

one would think of voting for any other girl."

The three girls then formed an escort of honor to conduct Betty into the class-room, where she was received with such a storm of applause that Miriam's face fell with disappointment. The election that followed resulted, as Jess expressed it, in a "walk-over" for Betty, who went to her room proud and happy as the recipient of the highest honor in the bestowal of her class-mates.

Lois, Jess, Caroline, Dorothy, and Belle followed her to her room to congratulate her.

"What a pity it is that Mary Livingstone isn't here! She would be so proud of you," said Jess.

"Oh, *don't* I wish she were here!" exclaimed Betty, fervently. "I have missed her terribly this year. But then, I have had such *good* friends," she added, looking about affectionately, and putting her arms around the necks of Lois and Jess, who were sitting beside her on the window-seat.

"Do you know what I have been thinking about?" she continued. "I was thinking

how hard it was for me at first, when the girls made fun of my funny old dresses, and how easy it was this evening when Miriam laughed at me; just because I have the best friends in the world;" and jumping up, she gave each of them a regular bear's hug and a vigorous kiss.

XIX

BETTY AND LOIS TALK OVER THE SUMMER

TWO delighted girls threw themselves into each other's arms on the opening day of their third year at The Pines. Lois had spent the summer in Europe with her father; Betty had stayed in Weston, with the exception of a number of short visits to relatives with her parents. Each was full of questions and stirring tales of the summer's experiences.

As soon as dinner was finished, they rushed up to their room and, after some preliminary hugs and kisses and smoothings of hair and exclamations of delight at being together again, they began. Fast as the human tongue could go, they recited in turn every detail of the summer. Lois told of her travels in England, Scotland, Holland, France, and Switzerland, of interesting places and quaint customs. Fascinating as they had

been, however, her warm heart turned readily enough from them to the people in Weston, whom she had learned to love dearly, because they first had given her insight into the depths of genuine human affections, of which, by reason of her early orphanhood and her father's travelling life, she had known almost nothing before her visit to Weston two years before. She insisted that Betty must tell her everything connected with her father and mother, which the latter gladly did, then asked her, —

"Now, Lois, whom do you want to hear about next?"

"Oh, dear Miss Jane and Elder Huggentugler, of course, the two dearest old people in the world!" exclaimed Lois.

"Yes, but I can't tell you about them both at once, can I? Which one first?" insisted Betty.

"Well, Miss Jane first," said Lois. "How often I think of her! Does she still 'calc'late how eggs is'?"

"Oh, dear, yes; and she still knits wash rags. I have one she sent you. I forgot to

get it out of my trunk. The red border shows her love for you. Only her pets get a red border, for she thinks it a sinful waste of time to ornament anything but waists. I was at her house for tea just before I left home, and it was one of the best meals I ever ate. Such neatness and refinement, too! But just imagine how I felt, Lois, when we were seated, and her mother said to me, 'Make yourself to hum, 'Lizbeth. We 're to hum, and we wish you was too!'"

"But — but — Betty, I don't understand. Her mother is one of the dearest old ladies in the world. Surely she did n't mean that she wanted you to go home."

"Wanted me to go home!" and Betty laughed and laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. "Why, of course not, you little goose. What she meant was that she wanted me to feel as 'homey' as if it were really my own home."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lois, and she too laughed hilariously.

"But that was n't the funniest," Betty continued. "Miss Jane's nephew was there, and

when I took a second leg of the best fried chicken I ever tasted, the little fellow eyed me in such a heart-broken way and squalled out, 'Oh, Aunty Jane, there she's gone and et my leg.'"

"Oh, I can see it all, just how Miss Jane glared at him!" laughed Lois.

"Did n't she, though! So many funny things happened this summer."

"Oh, tell me every one of them. I love to hear about those dear, funny people."

"Why, just think! One Sunday morning dear old Elder Huggentugler, evidently absorbed in something, walked into the church clear down to his pew, which you know is in the very front, with his hat on, and his old green umbrella open and held high over his head. Even father had to hide a smile behind his hand."

"What's that speech Mr. Dinkum said every Wednesday night at prayer-meeting? I was trying to think of it this summer to tell father when he was blue, but I could n't remember exactly what it was."

"Oh, Lois, don't you remember how he

always wound up, his trembling voice rising continually to the end, 'So I'll roll round with the year and never stand still, 'til the Master appears and says, "It is enough. Come up higher."'"

"Has he washed yet?" asked Lois, laughing.

"There is no evidence of it," said Betty. "You know how clean Elder Huggentugler always is. He says it 'riles his stumick' to see that dirty man. One Wednesday evening in prayer-meeting I was sitting next to him. We were singing 'On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand,' and right in front of us was Mr. Dinkum, singing at the top of his voice. The Elder leaned over to me and with such a funny twinkle in his eye, whispered, 'I hope that dirty man falls in and washes some of the coal off of him before he gets across,' and he grinned most maliciously.

"You know how the Elder used to talk about that 'screech-owl,' as he always called the organ. He's gotten all over that. He loves music so much that he could n't keep

out. We organized a choir and always sang an opening anthem; and he just could n't keep away. He says now he really believes he is n't as much of a stick-in-the-mud as he thought he was."

"Perhaps your singing in the choir had something to do with the change," suggested Lois.

"Do you think so?" asked the surprised girl. "I never thought of that. I guess it was his love for music not for me.

"Do you remember Mary Smith," she continued, "who came to the house one evening with her beau, John Hill, for tickets for the festival, and stayed so long and said such funny things? Well, they were married this summer."

"Oh, were they!" exclaimed Lois.

"Yes, they came to our house for the ceremony. Mary insisted on having a rehearsal, though there was no one but our family to witness the ceremony. So we all went into the sitting-room where father rehearsed them. As we started to the parlor, Mary admonished John to keep his hat on during the ceremony.

When I objected, she said she thought as she wore her hat he ought to wear his, adding, 'He looks so nice in his new stove-pipe;' and John wore it."

The girls laughed until Jess came in to see what they were laughing about.

XX

HER COMMENCEMENT

BETTY'S last year at The Pines was a time of great development. Always graceful and untrammelled, her slender figure had acquired a dignity of carriage which, combined with the rapidly increasing maturity of her face, gave a vivid impression of forceful personality. She lost none of her vivacity or brightness of spirit; always cheerful and hopeful, she brimmed over with sunshine.

She possessed, too, that indefinable something which the girls called "style," and those who looked deeper spoke of as "charm," a distinction which came principally from her self-forgetfulness. By some rare good fortune Betty had skipped that painful period of self-consciousness, when the real girl seems, for a time, to become imprisoned, and some suffering, blushing, unhappy

and malapert witch to have usurped her place. Poor misunderstood things! When they want to make a brilliant speech, nine times out of ten they are accused of impertinence or sarcasm. Their speeches before and after being made, it seems to them, are like the trick of the clever magician, in which he puts a rose up his sleeve and in its place takes out a viper.

This lack of awkwardness in Betty Miss Greene believed to be due to the influence of the Order of The Cup, which early had taught her to consider other people's feelings and interests, until her own had only a normal and healthy proportion of her thoughts and dreams. But Betty remained a dreamer to the end; a dreamer in the sense of one to whom came beautiful visions of life as it might be — and as she was young enough to believe it would be — thoughts that lifted her feet from the earth to walk on clouds. They kept her young in the ways of the world and indifferent to worldly valuations, though her growing sense of fitness and beauty made her sensi-

tive to the many small amenities and ceremonies of life, of which she had been blissfully ignorant when she first came to The Pines.

She profited greatly, too, by her association with the strong characters of Miss Greene and Miss Spice, whose influence supplemented that of the equally strong, though essentially different, character of her mother.

Miss Greene was, in the best sense, a woman of the world, cultured by contact with leaders of thought and action, both here and abroad; not only a teacher, but a writer on the great educational topics of the day, and a participant in many of the advanced philanthropic movements of the metropolis; in all respects a woman of action, yet one who had kept her heart warm and her spirit youthful, and whose never-failing appreciation of the sources of girlhood impulses made her a much-sought confidante and adviser of the young.

Betty's mother, cultivated in all the good old home culture of which New England is

justly proud (for she had moved to Pennsylvania from New England), was of all women the most unworldly. Education she had of the highest degree. She was widely read in the masterpieces of ancient and modern literature, and thoroughly conversant with the topics of the times, as presented in the leading newspapers and magazines; yet she conceived her duty to lie chiefly, if not entirely, with her home and her husband's flock. To them she was ministering angel, counsellor, guide, and friend.

Between these two, similar in breeding and feeling, though so far apart in their experiences of life, both representing in its highest type the "grand old name" of gentlewoman, Betty received rare training in all the essentials of perfect womanhood.

Miss Spice, more than any other teacher at The Pines, developed her love of learning for its own sake. She was pre-eminently the scholar of the school. To study, and to teach the thing she loved to study, made up to Miss Spice almost the sum and substance of life. A somewhat extended sojourn in

foreign countries had meant little but additional opportunities for adding to her store of knowledge, and of these she had availed herself to the full.

Her learning, however, had not destroyed her sympathy with the submerged of our great cities, and her one hobby — a hobby which had survived the trials of ten years — was the Settlement work in New York, to which the festival of the Order of The Cup had generously contributed. Her interest in Betty, starting with her desire to see her progress in her own beloved branch of mathematics, had been greatly increased and intensified by Betty's enthusiasm for the Order, whose efforts, so far as it concerned the members' work outside of their own immediate environment, she had turned principally in the direction of supporting enlarged fresh-air work by the Settlement.

Betty's cousin, Miss Payne, had exercised very little influence on her life. Almost continual travelling had kept her away from the school. She had been in England, and, the girls said, in every city and town in the

United States that boasted a woman's club. During her long and frequent absences Miss Greene had charge of the school, and its success was abundant testimony to her ability to conduct it.

In Lois, Betty found an ideal companion and friend; during those first weeks of her severe trial, their friendship struck its roots deep into the soil of sympathy and similarity of taste and feeling. It was a friendship unique among schoolgirls for its stability and its unselfishness. Though unlike in many characteristics, the two girls never jarred, and, in all their dreams of the future —which were many, in this dream-time of early girlhood — they were always together, doing the same things, loving the same people, cherishing the same ideals.

Mary Livingstone, next to Lois, was the schoolmate Betty admired most, and that she was several years older only added to her charm; but Mary had graduated the first year, and since then they had met only on Betty's short visit to New York and at the commencement season. She had been

Betty's first champion when the latter was the poor, persecuted little soul, and as such she would wear a halo throughout Betty's life. Yes, her future would be without some of its essential ingredients, if she could not see Mary often.

During the year, Betty and Miriam were thrown more and more into each other's society, until the bitterness of Miriam's feeling greatly diminished, owing to the outgrowing of childish jealousy and to the determination of some of their friends that they should come together in a united class sentiment. Of course Betty was pleased to be on less unpleasant terms with the only unfriendly girl in the school, and she went fully half-way to make up. While their relationship never developed into friendship, at least it ceased to be open hostility.

Betty and Lois resumed their reading to Mrs. Humphrey, and continued it through the year, for her son had been appointed master of a ship and had gone off on another long voyage, though not before seeing his mother provided with a constant com-

panion. The son's long letters about distant lands and adventures afforded them intense delight, and the elderly woman and the two young girls passed many gay hours, imagining the things the sailor graphically described.

Commencement week came, and the life at The Pines, which at first had seemed interminable, was now almost at an end. Betty said it reminded her of an accordeon, all stretched out at the beginning, three years before, and now closed, the folded years hidden away and the two ends meeting. She had gone through her final examinations with flying colors, and had gained the proud post of Valedictorian; Dorothy was Salutatorian; Miriam was Class Poet; Jess, as Class Historian, found ample field for her jokes and bright reminiscences; Lois held the grave position of Class Prophet, and she and Betty had some happy hours as they dreamed of the future of this wonderful class.

For Betty, one of the greatest events of

the week was the coming of Mr. Byrd, and she was all excitement over seeing her best friend's father. He was small and delicate looking, and one saw at a glance that the daughter had inherited many of her fine and charming traits from this very reserved but lovable man. His health required him to spend a large part of his time in travel, and he was rejoiced that in the future he would have his daughter for a travelling companion.

Of course Betty's father and mother came, and every one at once fell in love with the sweet faced woman. There was some shyness with the father, to whose profound scholarship Miss Payne had more than once referred. His apparent coldness, the result of a natural reserve and a studious life, gave to strangers the impression of hauteur, which his somewhat pedantic phraseology tended to augment; but his parishioners, who knew the sterling qualities that underlay the reserved exterior, never made this mistake. On this occasion he fell easily and naturally into his place, in the company of

the Bishop and the other learned men who had honored the occasion with their presence; with them he was perfectly at ease, and discussed the most abstruse questions with the utmost freedom, and an authority of erudition that gave him a high position among them.

The most startling event of that momentous week was — who would believe it? — that Miss Jane and the Elder came with Doctor and Mrs. Baird to see Betty graduate! The roommates could hardly believe the astounding news, but the first thing they saw, as the train stopped, was Miss Jane's eager face and, waving behind it, the Elder's old green umbrella. The Elder became a great favorite with the class, and he "did himself proud" by presenting to Betty's particular friends some "real nice posies," as he called the superb roses he had brought for the great occasion, roses of his own growing; but he saved an immense bunch to give to Betty when she read her valedictory.

Miss Jane had the "time of her life," and not only inspected the "styles" at a distance,

but "felt of" the lovely gowns, until she had a full realization of the "flimsy" character of modern materials, and of the shame of wasting time and money on them. The inside seams of gowns fresh from some famous metropolitan dressmaker were a "scandal" to her. While at the school, Miss Jane's manner in private was very severe over the extravagance and the poor inside finish of the dresses; but when she got back to Weston it underwent a complete change, and her air of authority on such matters, as she told of the splendors of The Pines, was a wonder to behold.

Commencement day arrived, and to the eager eyes scanning the sky at daybreak, it presented an unbroken expanse of heavenly blue. Night came on fair and cool for that time of the year, though, so accommodating is nature at rare times — for which we love her as we do infrequent smiles — it was not too cool for those ideal dress materials of a young girl's commencement — white mull, organdie, and Swiss.

Betty's simple, lovely dress, the gift of her

cousin, gave her a feeling of rapture that only one other dress can equal in a girl's lifetime. Lois wore one not unlike it. Indeed, all the girls looked like white rosebuds from the quaint old garden, which they were soon to leave forever.

The music, the flowers, the soft summer air, the glamour of to-morrow — the dear, fearful future — all gave a joy akin to sorrow, indeed, the nearest to sorrow that many of them had ever felt; but hopes were high, and Life was a "fair sea" on which their tiny barks would soon be launched. Life! Just the word thrilled them! How it ran like a golden thread through all they said, these fair, brave young mariners!

The Elder, at eighty, was awed into something like respect for this "Life" he had so unthinkingly sailed. Having his work to do, he had never meditated on it; but, as it fell from the sweet young lips, the word took on a new meaning, and he tried to catch its elusive sense.

Miss Jane just enjoyed the "purtiness" of it all, keeping one unwavering eye on Betty,

"She was a very different girl from the one who had come to the school nearly three years before." *Page 277.*

and the other on the outlook for anything new in styles.

When Betty arose to deliver the valedictory, Mrs. Baird clasped her hands and turned pale; the Doctor sat immovable, but intense; Miss Jane peered around to see how every one was taking that ravishing vision, then her eyes never left the girl's face; the Elder crouched down in his seat, and waited for the music of her voice; the Bishop's face brightened, and he leaned over to whisper to Paul, whose glance at Betty and affirmative nod to his grandfather seemed to have something in common; while the body of students, seated in the front rows, greeted their leader, their heroine, with a subdued, worshipful "Ah!"

As she stood there, her face slightly flushed with excitement, she was a very different girl from the one who had come to the school nearly three years before. Though perhaps not tall for her age, she was above the medium height, her tow-colored hair had darkened, and the yellow tints had deepened,

until it could, without any stretch of the imagination, be called golden; the unruly tangle had become a soft, fluffy wave, which made a charming frame for the sweet young face. In her dark brown eyes were golden lights which, caught between the thick lashes, gave a feeling of brightness, of sunlight.

Her voice had long been noted for its richness and sweetness, and that, combined with an inspiring personality, lent to her words, perhaps, undue importance; but that they were of unusual weight for one so young was acknowledged by the Bishop, who felt, like the Elder, that he had discovered the young girl and had a part in her triumphs.

As she stood there ready to read her short farewell, a little dog, his tail drooping in utter dejection, walked pathetically up the aisle and across the platform, and sat down sorrowfully at Betty's side, on her first train, looking up into her face with sad, adoring eyes. He had been rolling in the mud, and the tear-stained locks marked dark circles

around his bloodshot and melancholy eyes. Patiently he sat there, and Betty, evidently careful not to disturb him, looked down with a smile and went on speaking without a break. With his dismal old face turned up adoringly, he watched her until she had finished, joined in the storm of applause that followed, by thumping his stumpy tail wildly on the floor, then walked slowly off the platform and disappeared as he had come.

After Miss Payne had uttered the closing words of the exercises, Betty sat there receiving congratulations, surrounded by bouquets of magnificent flowers from the Livingstones and half a dozen other city friends, from the Bishop and his grandsons, from the Elder, from Miss Jane, from Lois's father, and from many undergraduates. But the Elder said, —

"She 's the purtiest posy of 'em all."